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THE MIDDLE WALL

EDWARD MARSHALL

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THE MIDDLE WALL

BY

EDWARD MARSHALL

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE ROUGH RIDERS,"
"LIZETTE," ETC.

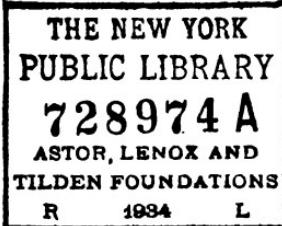


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ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

The Middle Wall.

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F. L. MARSHALL

THE CHAPTER BEFORE THE FIRST THIS BOOK'S SAILING DAY

I don't know much about novels. I git most o' my readin' out o' th' Bible an' th' *New York Herald*. Still that don't mean that I don't care for fiction. I reckon there's a little o' that in both them publications.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy*.

After it was decided that this tale might be made into a book, and while neither the publisher nor myself knew at all what the book's name would be, I visited Captain Burgee at his home on Cape Cod, near Provincetown, for the express purpose of telling him about it. At first he seemed to be somewhat startled. Then his face took on a sheepish expression as he said:

"Well, by John! A book! Be you goin' to put me into it?"

"Certainly," I answered. "You are most of it."

"Quincy!" he ejaculated.

Then he puffed vainly at his pipe for a while. Finally he looked over toward Mrs. Henry Parton, who sat in a barrel-chair on the porch, not far from us, and said:

"Adams!" He took another long breath through the cold pipe. No smoke responded. "Nory, c'n I have a light?" he asked.

"I'll get one for you, Captain," she said quickly, and jumped up, adding: "I felt in my pocket a moment ago and noticed that your matches were all gone."

She hurried into the house and returned quickly with a lighted match which she held over the bowl of his pipe while he puffed. His control over his muscles was not yet quite complete enough to make it easy for him to hold steadily so small an object as a match. Mrs. Burgee had followed Norah to the porch and stood behind her husband, but he did not see her.

"All right," he said to me at length. "Me and the old ship ain't done *much* that we're ashamed of." He paused and looked at me quizzically. Then he added: "We couldn't at sea—without gittin' found out, by John Quincy Adams! Tryin' to hide things on ship-board is a good deal like tryin' to conceal your presence from the girl that's settin' on your lap." He grinned. "First thing you know publicity 'll up an' kiss ye—smack!" He became conscious of Mrs. Burgee's presence behind him at this moment. There is a subtle sympathy between those two. "Lyddy," he said, "he's goin' to put me an' th' *Lyddy* in a book! It amused her. She is a slim, wiry little woman, and she sat down on the top step of the little flight leading from the porch and laughed. Before she had finished she had her apron over her head and was rocking to and fro in a convulsion of silent merriment. He smiled at her. Then he turned to me.

"Seems to kind o' tickle Lyddy," he said, cheerily, and added, "Be ye goin' to tell about that time when Parton was along?"

"Yes," I replied, and Mrs. Parton looked up with an interested expression on her face. But she said nothing.

"John!" said the Captain, thoughtfully. "A

book, eh? But you nor nobody can't find words that 'll re'lly *describe* a v'yage at sea! There ain't none. An' if you're goin' to tell about th'—th' accident, an' what Parton must have felt, I warn you that you're foolish. That's th' trouble about language, by Quincy! It can't log down th' storms that happen in our souls. An' a fire at sea? Th' first time th' Devil started one he leaned his hot elbows on a wave, an' while they hissed an' the scaldin' steam curled up around him real comf'table, he says, lookin' at the burnin' ship, he says:

" 'There!' he says. 'That's more like Hell than anythin' that I've done yit, by Adams!'"

We talked for some time about that voyage, while Mrs. Burgee, overcome by the joke on Obed, that I was playing by putting him into a book, flapped her apron over her head at intervals and rocked beneath it in that ecstasy of silent mirth. Finally I reached for my crutches, preparatory to stumping down to the road, where a Cape Cod beach wagon was waiting to take me back to the train at Provincetown.

"What ye goin' to *call* th' book?" the Captain asked.

I told him that I had not yet been able to get a title that pleased the publisher, and pulled a number of letters from my pocket which had been written to me by Mr. Cook, president of the Dillingham Company. I had suggested a great many titles; but he had rejected all of them, frequently with impolite comments. The Captain himself read those of the letters which had been written on a typewriter, and called to Norah to help him puzzle out the ones which Mr. Cook had written with a pen. He laughed

when, having struggled through most of them with great difficulty, she handed them back to me.

"Well, now!" he exclaimed. "I thought that it was the author who was in command in them things. Well! B' John Quincy Adams!"

I told him how wrong his idea had been.

"So you an' th' other plain workin' men, like th' printers an' binders, are jest in th' crew!" he said. "An' th' public is th' passengers! It's th' publisher that's on th' quarterdeck a-givin' orders?"

"Of course," I said. "The author is either before the mast as the least important man on board, or locked up in the brig, or overboard."

"I want to know!" said he. Then he looked at me steadily for some time. "But I guess that's all ri——." He stopped again. He looked at my crutches. "I don't want to hurt a *cripple's* feelin's," he said. "But don't *you* care if you *be* crippled," he continued, comfortingly. "I knowed a man that got hurt and lost a leg once. He kicked with th' other one like thunder. But he had to go to England, an' th' ship was wrecked. He unstrapped his wooden leg an' floated with it underneath his chin, an' he was th' only person saved. Without it he'd 'a' drownded. My! How he laughed!"

"Can't you suggest something for a title?" I asked, hastily. He sat silent for a moment. Then he picked up a Bible which lay on a chair near to him—and he worked his arm toward it and grasped it, with some difficulty. It had oilskin sewed to its binding and so arranged that it could be tied around it by strings sewed to its edges. This had been done, he said, so that he could read it on deck during bad weather at sea. "Don't know's I ever done it,

though,'" he added. His hands trembled a good deal, so Norah took the book and asked him what he wished to find in it. She found the place for him after he had said that he would like to look at the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

"While I've be'n settin' here with my pulley blocks all stuck an' my steerin' gear gone wrong," said the Captain, "I've be'n thinkin' about literature a good deal. Parton, he's read books of travel to me, an' Nory, she's read novels to me, an' Lyddy, she's read marine reports an' sech things to me. But I've found that th' best there is is that that's printed right here in th' Bible. I reckon I'd gone crazy if I hadn't had that. They've all read that to me, an' I've read it to myself. Some folks deny God an' religion, simply because they don't understand. There's a town called Gilead in Maine. A boy who had heard a revivalist in a nearby village, walked five miles to Gilead with a fifty cent piece in his hand.

"'I want some balm,' he says to th' storekeeper.

"'I ain't got none,' says th' storekeeper, 'but I can sell you kerosene or molasses.'

"'Ain't there no balm in Gilead?' asks th' boy, surprised.

"'No,' says th' storekeeper. 'I ain't got none, an' this is th' only store here.'

"An' th' boy growed up a infidel, because he thought the Bible lied. That's th' way with lots o' folks. They don't take no trouble to figger things out an' find what they re'lly mean. Th' Bible's th' very greatest book there is, an' Christ was the greatest pilot in th' world. There re'lly ain't nothin' that'll compare to th' logbook of His journeyin's an'

them of His disciples. Why don't you name your literary craft out of th' Bible?"

"Suggest a name," I said.

He read along until he reached the twelfth verse. Then he stopped.

"If you've re'lly be'n so foolish as to write about me an' th' *Lyddy*," he said, slowly, "why don't you call th' book '*Th' Middle Wall*'? Th' old ship certainly did stand between me an' destruction; between Parton an' death, another v'yage to South Africky, old man MacFarren's crookedness an', mebbe, poverty; between *Lyddy* an' plain widowhood without no nice green grass at all on it; between Nory an' bein' an' old maid—'cause she never *would* have married if she hadn't got that Parton back; between us all an' trouble of one kind or another. Why don't you call your book '*Th' Middle Wall*'?"

Mr. Cook approved, and so I have.

And I am dedicating it to Tom Masson, poet, humorist, story-teller and one of the editors of *Life*, whom I have not seen for years; but whom I saw daily during the time of our serious beginnings. It was by his invitation that I first set foot upon a sailing vessel, and that ship was called the *Lydia Skol-feld*, as was the one which acted as "the middle wall." Tom and I were boys then, and his father was master of the ship. I believe that Tom was born on board of her, but it may be that it was in Shanghai, China, or in Orange, N. J., that he first saw light. He had spent much time on board ship, at any rate, and I am told that on those occasions when he had earned chastisement he would avoid it by scuttling like a monkey to the bow-sprit's end, where none dared follow, and there sit, alternately high above

the sea and drenched by its spray as the ship tossed, until fear that he would lose his hold would make his father promise him immunity from punishment; or, when there was an especially heavy sea on, Tom might choose the swaying mast-head as a place of refuge, where he would sit cross-legged and grin impishly at the sailors sent to catch him. On the occasion of that never-to-be-forgotten visit to the real *Lydia Skolfeld*, Tom had obtained his father's permission to bring some friends over to the dock in Brooklyn, where the ship was lying. The old sea-captain had, naturally, expected that the friends would be boys; but I was the only youngster. Tom's other guests were, I am almost certain, Joseph R. Buchanan, sociologist, author, labor-leader and big-souled sympathizer with all who are oppressed; and John H. Beadle, of Indiana, historian, sternest critic and opponent of Brigham Young and his followers in Utah, statistician, and a man possessed of such a fund of experience and information as I am certain never hid before in one human head. Strange friends for Tom, a boy, to have! I was first to enter the cabin, and Captain Masson greeted me pleasantly, as one of Tom's boy friends. But when the other guests came down the companionway and proved to be men grown and men distinguished, his embarrassment was great. He received them with hearty courtesy, however, and then took Tom alone to the dark dock. From thence came sounds of an earnest conversation, the burden of which seemed to be that Tom was an unregenerate imp and that there were not spoons enough on board to go around.

I told Captain Burgee about this just before I left

Cape Cod. He remembered Captain Masson very well—as very nearly every Yankee sailor of his generation does—and spoke with sincere admiration of him and of his ship. She was lost off Newport, and while Captain Burgee explained that her loss was in no way the fault of her commander, Captain Masson, he said, never recovered from his grief over it. He was, at the time it occurred, the oldest master sailing into New York or Boston Harbor, and had never had a serious accident before. But no lives were lost in this one.

"Cap'n Masson," said Captain Burgee, "was a fine man, an' a God-made seaman. He *did* hate to spend much time ashore! He couldn't feel as if 't was safe at all. Made him nervous. 'What,' he used to say, when circumstances forced it, 'would happen if one of them railroad trains should have to tack against a head-wind and run down th' house that I was stayin' in? Why, a collision out to sea would be jest nothin' to it! They go so fast! An' them shore houses ain't staunch built. They'd sink before we had a chance to git a life-belt on!'

"An' on them rare occasions when he did have to go to bed ashore at th' house of one or 'nother of his children, it was that boy Tom that had to sit up nights to throw water up ag'inst th' windows of th' Cap'n's room, so'st things would seem nat'r'al to him an' he could sleep. That story's be'n told 'bout other sailors; but I reckon that that was th' real way it started."

During most of the conversation which occurred on this one of my visits to Captain Burgee, Mrs. Burgee and Mrs. Parton had listened attentively to all that had been said. On Mrs. Parton's really beautiful

young Irish face there played a smile of interest and amusement such as only such a face could wear, and Mrs. Burgee was occasionally overcome by merriment, which made it necessary for her to throw her apron over her head and rock in silent joy upon the top step of the porch. I had shaken the somewhat helpless hand of the Captain, gone down the gravelled walk between the rows of box plants to the road, and with hearty help from the driver of the beach wagon managed to get myself up to the front seat of the vehicle—Cape Cod beach wagons never were designed for cripples' use—and started down the heavy, sandy road which leads over a great dune to Provincetown, where I was to take the train, when the driver turned and said that he reckoned somebody was a-callin'. I turned and looked behind through a bit of glass in the back curtain, and saw Mrs. Burgee running with some difficulty through the sand. She was waving her sun-bonnet and had the skirts of her calico dress gathered tight about her and "showin' her coast line real plain," as the Captain said they used to do when she went to church on Sunday mornings before they were married, and as they certainly do in the figurehead of the *Lydia*. Behind her hurried Norah, graceful even while coming through the clogging sand. The driver stopped. Mrs. Burgee came up to us first.

"I'm awful glad you're puttin' Obed in that book," she said.

I had no chance to answer, for just then Mrs. Parton reached the wagon, and if ever her fine, strong figure, blue eyes and rich red hair made a lovely picture, they did then, after the run through the sand. She interrupted Mrs. Burgee. Evidently

the same trouble was on her mind. She was willing to have her husband's story told; but not her own.

"Sure," said she with that fascinating touch of Irish in her speech, "you haven't told things about *me* in your ——"

"We'll miss our train," I hinted to the driver, grinning, and he hurried on, leaving two of the most delightful women I have ever known standing staring in the Cape Cod road behind us. It was not gallant, but there was nothing else to do. And as we went I heard the hearty laugh of the Captain in his distant seat on the porch, from which he had witnessed the discomfiture of the two women whom he loves, and whom I have grown to look upon as among the most charming of their sex, but have done scant justice to in the following chapters. Just before we dipped down on the other side of the dune and out of sight, I looked through the little glass again. Norah was still standing in the middle of the road, her beautiful hair flying in the strong wind from the Atlantic; but Mrs. Burgee had sunk down to the sand and was rocking back and forth there, with her apron over her head.

And so this tale is called "The Middle Wall," and is dedicated to Tom Masson.

EDWARD MARSHALL.

The Middle Wall

CHAPTER ONE

A MOTIVE FOR ADVENTURING

*Bein' quiet an' bein' scart ain't especial likely to go together. Th' beller of th' coward is gen'y louder than th' hero's war-whoop.—The Logbook of *The Lyddy*.*

Henry Parton was a young man of singular persistence and steadfastness of purpose; but he was not more than twenty-two when he realized that he had been defeated in two directions, each of these two roads leading through a woman's pleasure to points where, he believed, his own happiness lay.

The first of the women was his mother. His father had died in his early youth, leaving enough money behind to furnish a living income for the widow and her child. With her the boy's years had been passed very happily until he had been sent away to school. His relations with his mother had been more like those between companions of the same age than like those which generally exist between mother and son, and he had fondly believed that he was all in all to her, just as she was certainly all in all to him. But when, in his twentieth year he returned for the long vacation, prepared to make ready for the University in the autumn, he found a strange state of affairs. The Parton money had, for many years, been in the hands of a barrister named Thomas MacFarren for

management, and when the young fellow, for the first time taking a man's interest in affairs, looked into the condition of the investments which MacFarren had made, he found, to his astonishment, that they had been so bad that the principal was seriously impaired. This was one shock. A second one came when he went to his mother with angry criticism of MacFarren on his lips and was met by almost hysterical defense of the accused man and the reluctant confession that she had promised to make him her second husband. Parton accepted the double shock of learning that he was no longer first in her affections and finding that they had been so unworthily bestowed, more quietly than most young men would have done. This may or may not have been because MacFarren had a niece-in-law bearing the same surname (christened Norah), but of no blood relationship, who was his ward, and with whom Parton had been in love since the sticky taffy age.

Thus the young man's life became very serious, suddenly. Very keenly he felt his mother's defection from her exclusive love for him; but concerning it he breathed no word to any one, although he pondered on it with distress. And the dwindling of the family fortune was a most serious matter. It had not been in his mother's somewhat inconsequential plans for him that he should learn how to make his living, and this was, therefore, bad for him—but he reflected that it was most likely to be worse for her. He was unwilling that she should suffer; and that MacFarren at his profession, lazy as he was, would earn enough to make her comfortable he did not believe. So what there was left of his share he surrendered to her with such apparent cheerfulness of statement that he

could earn for himself that no one questioned him as to ways and means. Thus no one knew that he would have been quite unable to answer questions if any had been asked.

During the festivities which attended Mrs. Parton's wedding to MacFarren, her son asked Norah to marry him, and was refused almost with gaiety. She contended that they were both too young to intelligently consider such matters, and suggested a game of tennis in lieu of matrimony.

After that he felt that he had every good and sufficient reason for leaving England and trying to find some foreign field in which to labor for a fortune. He chose South Africa, and journeyed thither very shortly after his mother had become MacFarren's wife.

He had a hard time at first, being without resources worth mentioning except determination. Several plans when tried gave poor results. Finally he secured a post with a gold mining company well over toward the eastern boundary in the north of the Free State, and, while he made no glittering moves at first, quickly won a reputation for hard work, determination, fearlessness and honesty. He could see no spots of dazzling brilliance in his immediate future; but he decided that he would rub patiently and hard, with the hope that he might polish roughness into glitter.

He was not a good talker, but he was an ideal listener. He proved his pluck on more than one occasion, and was finally put at work which was fairly remunerative, and kept too busy to allow much time for indulging suspicions of MacFarren, worry over his mother's future, or regret because Norah's senti-

ments were not as vivid as his own. Comfort came with work. That MacFarren would, sooner or later, prove his complete unworthiness he did not doubt; but if he himself prospered, he would be able to save his mother from some of the worst of the consequences of her marriage to him. And he began to realize that Norah had been quite right in refusing him. A betrothal before he had proved himself would have been absurd. Therefore, with hope for the happiness of both women in his heart and a full consciousness that his own was so wrapped up in theirs that there was little unselfishness in his effort, he persisted and steadily progressed.

At first he was only negatively popular with the men. But presently he made their liking positive. The man who brought this about was an ex-sailor named Black. He claimed to have done great things upon the sea, but said that he, being of broad mind and adventurous disposition, had wished to know a little of all kinds, and so had come out country to try mining for a time. He was an able chap enough, and had letters which showed that he had been a competent ship's officer, having served as master of a vessel for a time and more extensively as mate on ships that sailed to both Americas. But from the first it was apparent that Parton and Black were not of kinds that went well with each other. They had no open quarrel, but Black was a boastful fellow and drank much. He was offensive when in liquor, and it was strange but true that he chose Parton as the person on whom to vent his most unpleasant moods. It was during one of these loud-mouthed intervals that Parton showed an ability which his associates had not known of, and which

not only pleased them but won promotion for him. It was Saturday afternoon, and most of the Englishmen connected with the enterprise were gathered about the little group of corrugated iron buildings which formed the headquarters of the company in a country where wooden houses would have been destroyed by ants. Some one proposed a trial of skill at marksmanship. Considerable shooting with rifles and shot-guns had been done and revolver practice had been under way for some time, when Black, having drunk too much and being therefore in a properly nasty mood for annoying anyone, came out of his house and began firing at an old hat which some one threw into the air for a target. He missed invariably and was angered by it. Parton, in the meantime, had taken no part in the shooting, and was sitting quietly on a pile of saddles, smoking and making no comment. It may have been his very silence which made Black's abominable temper turn especially against him. He walked up to him angrily.

"Why don't you try it yourself, if you think I'm such a damned bad shot?" he demanded.

Parton looked at him, surprised.

"I haven't said that you are a bad shot," he answered, and then grinned, quietly. "You don't interest me. I haven't watched your shooting."

Black answered in the manner of the drunken ruffian in Africa—a section of the world where an especial vocabulary, in some details even more expressive of vituperation than was the profane lingo of our own Western prairies, has been invented for such talk—and was very near to being personally insulting. That was when the men in the camp first saw a look come into Parton's eyes which from that

time on was remembered vividly. Those eyes were, ordinarily, of a soft gray; but on that occasion the softness vanished and they became like steel. Parton rose, slowly, and with his hands in his pockets.

"Black," he said in that aggravating drawl which is the manner of some incensed Englishmen, "you're outrageously annoying."

This was nearer to emphasis than any of them had heard from Parton up to that time, and they gathered round him, interested. He waited for a moment for the amazed Black to reply, but as none came, he went on:

"You're a miserably underbred ruffian, and you *can't* shoot, you know. Really, you can't shoot worth a damn!"

The astonishment grew. Again Parton waited for a reply, and as none forthcame, spoke once more, in a voice which was almost caressing in its soft and carefully enunciated accents:

"You don't know the first thing about shooting, Black! That's even when you're sober—and to-day you're drunk. Black, I've been thinking about you—only for a moment; you're not worth more than that—and I've made up my mind that you're too loud and boastful. Why, Black, I can beat you at shooting, without taking my hands out of my pockets!"

Black found his tongue at last, after having gasped inarticulately a few times, and used it for the purpose of uttering sundry shocking words.

"Throw up the hat again," said Parton. "I will prove what I have said. I hope that after that you wont boast so. It's vulgar—from a man who *can't* shoot!"

Black continued to profanely stutter.

"Throw it up," said Parton.

And Black, not having the least idea that Parton could shoot or had anything to shoot with; but not knowing what else to do, threw up the hat.

As it reached the highest point in its flight, fire spat from the front of Parton's trousers, where two large bunches, as of massive, clenched fists, had made the cloth protrude. This unexpected fusillade made most of the men jump back and swear in sheer astonishment. There were five sharp cracks, two from the right-hand pocket and three from that upon the left. Parton had seemed to scarcely glance at the hat; but the amazed watchers could see it jump in the air. When it was picked up five perforations marred it.

The men gathered about Parton, wondering. He said nothing and started to sit down upon the pile of saddles again, but was interrupted by the fact that the cloth of his trousers had caught fire on one side. In order that he might pound the smouldering spot, Parton took one hand from his pocket, and in it was a small American derringer. He laid it down while he attended to the conflagration in his trousers. Then he took from the other pocket the other little pistol of the pair. The derringer was not well known in South Africa, nor is it to-day.

"They were given to me by an American whom I helped in a row down in Lorenzo Marquez, one day," said Parton, working at his interesting little fire. "Nice little things, aren't they? I haven't practised very much with them, but they seem to shoot well."

By this time Black had gone to his own small house, saying beastly things which interested no one.

That was the beginning of Parton's success in South Africa. He had not enough technical knowledge of machinery to make him available for an important place in the management of a mine which, like this one, was principally operated by engines, steam drills and pumps, power hoists and crushers, but his technical knowledge of derringer pistols called attention to other merits. The fact that the universally disliked Black left the mine soon after this episode also helped Parton in the friendship of his mates. The situation in South Africa is somewhat different from that which existed in our American mining districts at the time when individual miners were making great strikes and the field was full of rough adventurers. While it would be false to say that the South African mines are at all like the sessions of the Society of Christian Endeavor in their general moral aspect, still it is true that considerable restraint is exercised and general ruffianism is unlikely to bring popularity. Black announced as he left the camp that he longed to go to sea again, being sick of mining; but it was understood that his almost complete ostracism by the other men was really responsible for his departure.

All of the coin with which the natives and others were paid, and most of the supplies, had to be brought up to the mine from Lorenzo Marquez, on the coast. A part of the way—that portion of it which lay through the mountains—was accomplished by a mule pack-train, which met a train of bull wagons when better ground was reached, and these completed the journey to the mine. One day the mule train was held up and the company lost nearly a thousand pounds. The Englishman who had been in charge

of it was drunk at the time, and the kaffirs who had been with him could tell no intelligent story. Of course the Englishman was, after such a breach of trust, put at other and less responsible work. This made it necessary to select a man to fill his place, and probably because of his coolness with Black and his skill with derringers, and greatly to his own surprise, the choice fell upon Parton. He was definitely pleased by the change in his fortunes, not only because the work offered a higher wage, but because he had become heart-sick of his unimportant labor about the mine itself. But at the very start he somewhat annoyed his employers by declaring that he blamed the previous disaster entirely to the drunkenness of the trainmaster, and that he believed that no one would think of molesting a sober man.

And the trouble came on the first trip that the train made in his charge. It carried an especially large amount of treasure on their journey, for it had the regular monthly supply, in addition to enough to make up for the loss by the previous month's robbery. Thus, when it did not arrive on time, the camp was worried and plans were made to start a party out in search of it in case it had not appeared by morning.

At sunrise this relief was organized, and all the camp was astir to see it start; but just as it was about to move, the missing train came into sight. The men cheered when they saw it; but paused in their joyous shouting when they noticed the queer party which marched in advance of it. Black was the first member of the group, and he walked with his hands behind him and head bowed, as if in contemplation deep or weighty sorrow. Next came two Portu-

guese, similarly disconsolate. The fact that their hands were also held behind them made the camp think that perhaps Black's attitude was not wholly one of peaceful revery. The three men appeared in the early morning light to be singularly pensive and disconsolate. After them came Parton—hands in trousers pockets—and then the kaffirs and the train.

At first the true significance of this procession's strange appearance was not fully understood. A moment later the whole truth became apparent. The leading trio had their hands securely bound and marched as Parton's prisoners.

After they had reached the camp the story was soon told. It had been Black who had led the first attack on the treasure train; but the Englishman had been too drunk and the kaffirs too surprised or frightened to recognize him. He had not gone to sea as he had announced that he should do. He had laid in wait and robbed successfully. But, being of vulgar, greedy, mental make-up, he had not been satisfied. He had, as he thought, carefully studied the situation, keeping, through bribed kaffirs, posted on what was going on at camp. He had heard about the second train which was to travel with a double dole of treasure. He had not heard, however, that Parton had been placed in charge of it.

The details of the sad episode which followed this lack of information were quickly gathered, but mainly from the kaffirs. (Parton was hungry, and, having done his duty, went to eat.) As the train passed among the rocks, Parton's attention had been attracted by some unusual formation in them—he had recently felt great interest in geology—and he had been lingering behind and out of sight when

the robbers had affrighted the astonished natives and Parton's one, liver-hearted, English helper. These had held up their hands and submitted to rope bonds, almost without protest and wholly without words loud enough to reach Parton's ears. It was after this had all been attended to, and while Black and his precious associates were beginning to rummage the wagons, that Parton, astonished but silent, appeared upon the scene. They did not see him, being busy with the loot, and thinking that they had secured all the guardians of the train, and so were utterly astonished, when, standing only a few feet from them and with his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, Parton gave them disconcerting orders.

The Portuguese would probably have made a fight of it, had it not been for Black, who instantly noticed Parton's attitude, and remembered what had happened to the hat when those bunches in the young man's pockets had belched fire and lead. His hands went up without protest or delay, and, as they were rising, he shouted out a warning to his criminal friends to get their own up quickly if they did not long for perforations.

Parton then rallied his kaffirs and had the robbers bound. The robbery was averted, and Parton marched the ruffians to the mine as I have stated.

Thus far the story was told while Parton, its hero, was out of ear shot, eating. The inquisitive and excited group of listeners was breathless when he appeared. Then there came an interruption from the assistant superintendent of the mine, a hearty but not too quick-witted Britisher.

"But, I say, old chap," he said to Parton, with a puzzled look upon his face, "you didn't have your

derringers with you! You couldn't have stopped the thieves with them, you know, and your rifle was in the wagon, the kaffir says! You had loaned your derringers to me, you remember!"

"Yes," said Parton, quietly, "I remember."

An expression of incredulity and disgust spread over Black's face at this remark.

"What did you have in your pockets, then, you damned cuss?" he asked impolitely.

"My thumbs," said Parton, smiling sweetly.

CHAPTER TWO

HOME AGAIN

It's strange how diff'rent things is from what we think they're goin' to be. Th' last v'yage 'fore we was married, I just spent hours a-figgerin' how happy I was goin' to be when Lyddy set down on my lap an' let me hug her when I got to home. But I went and had a bille that made it hard for me to set alone an' would a-killed me if she had done as I had thought I wanted her to do.—*The Logbook of The Lyddy.*

That affair sent Parton's stock up, not only with his immediate associates, but with the capitalists who backed the mine. For over a year he remained there at an increased salary, and while he stayed there were no more attacks upon the train. But the field really offered few opportunities. He looked the situation over carefully and found that the very best that he could hope for in that work was to become a mining superintendent, and that prospect was not sufficiently alluring to entice him. It would never have yielded an income high enough to have permitted him to do the two things which he had ever in his mind—provide liberally for his mother in case MacFarren ruined her, and show Norah that he was capable of much; at least enough to make her happy. He had, at first, kept up a correspondence with the beautiful Irish girl, but it had languished, more through his fault than hers, because he felt that he was accomplishing so little that he had no right to write to her of love, and he had no heart to put much of other matters in his letters.

Finally he went to Kimberley to look around.

Kimberley draws its breath and pumps its blood from the diamond fields, and, naturally, little else is talked of there. The fields are the largest in the world, but are, like the gold fields in South Africa, without hope for the individual miner. They are controlled absolutely by a trust more powerful in its way than any born of Yankee ingenuity and freedom. It has been decided that diamonds are merely carbon, crystallized through tremendous heat and vast pressure. They come to the surface through vents (called chimneys) in the upper strata, and have not been found except in connection with a curious clay called "blue earth," by the experts, unless in such circumstances as to indicate that they have originally been so bedded, but have only been discovered after they have been thrown out by some natural process and carried long distances from their home ground.

But the stay in Kimberley and what he learned there about diamonds whetted Parton's ambition, and, after he had failed to make a business connection there more profitable than that he had already opened at the mine, he decided to go elsewhere and himself search for the hard white stones.

Perhaps it was because of his quiet persistence, perhaps it was because of his superior intelligence, perhaps it was because of sheer good luck; but, at any rate, his search succeeded. Not many individual expeditions of the kind have won, and the record of Parton's among those that have, stands high.

He went into new regions. That is by no means a difficult thing to do in South Africa, although it is rarely a safe thing for a lone man to do. He found "blue earth." He wrote to his mother only indefinitely of his plans, fearing that they would

frighten her, and, after his work had actually begun, he was isolated in a region inaccessible to messengers and far from the possibility of getting mail. But when he emerged from the wilderness, he had explored three "chimneys," and taken out rough stones which, after he had paid all expenses, and wholly straightened out affairs at the Cape, tucked into his belt, he estimated to the full value of sixty thousand pounds, or roughly \$300,000 American money. Then he set his face toward England. At that time two years had passed since he had heard from home. At first he thought of cabling up from Capetown, but finally he decided to appear in London unexpected and give his mother a happy surprise.

On the homeward voyage his thoughts were all of her and Norah. In his boyhood, his father, hoping to inculcate practices of thrift, had given him a life ownership of a drawer in the Suffolk Security Fire-proof Vaults, and his first act in London was to go there to rid himself of his treasure belt, as much for comfort as for safety; but he found the drawer too small. So, after an interested fingering of the boyish treasures which were locked in it, he passed on to the Royal Union Safety Deposit Institution, where he secured a larger drawer, and, leaving his diamonds, belt and all, therein, he hurried home to see his mother.

It was with a mixture of pleasant emotions that he climbed the steps of the old house near Russell Square; but, an hour later as he sat in his mother's room, there was little but deep distress in his heart. She was ill and had been for several months. It was also evident from the condition of things which was only too apparent in the house, that her circum-

stances, which had been quite comfortable when he had gone away and which might have remained so up to the time of her death if her investments had been left as they were, had become straitened. If he had dreamed that MacFarren could have so reduced her means, he would have permitted no delay between the beginning of his own good fortune and the time when she should have a share in it; but the idea had not occurred to him, and so she had been subjected to endless worry over money matters, which had been terribly aggravated during the last few months by fears for his own safety, and, finally, a deep conviction that he had perished in the wilderness—a conviction which no one had been able to unseat from her mind, and which, of course, had not been denied from Africa. Thus his effort to pleasantly surprise her had really done her harm, and he felt remorseful over it.

At first, partly because of her weakened condition, and partly because the matter was quite driven from his mind by his distress at finding her in such a state, he did not tell her the real extent of his good fortune; but merely assured her that he had done well, and that she need no longer worry over money. Indeed, the glory of his own achievement had greatly dwindled in his own estimation since he had found her in such sore distress. But the poor woman, sickened and discouraged as she was, could find little good in anything, and, after the first paroxysm of her joy over seeing him again had passed, she loaded him with reproaches for having let her grieve when he was really well and prospering. It was in vain that he attempted to explain to her and pacify her. She refused to admit that any circumstances

could have warranted his long silence. She declared that he must have lost his love for her entirely to have let her suffer so, and he felt quite helpless in the midst of the shower of tears which she rained upon his hands.

It was then that he tried to impress upon her the fact, that no matter how great had been his mistakes in the past, there should be none in the future. This pacified her for a time, and that afternoon they passed some very pleasant hours together—hours which were really so like the delightful times that they had known in the old days that his heart was lightened, and he began again to believe that many happy days would come. MacFarren came in for a time during the afternoon, and when Parton saw how completely his mother's heart was wrapped up in the man, he set aside as much of his resentment toward him as he could, and, after he had gone, accepted, tolerantly, all the excuses which his mother made for his bad management, and what Parton feared was real neglect.

For an hour or two, mother and son were quite happy in their reunion, and Mrs. MacFarren even insisted that his dinner should be brought with hers and that he should eat it from a tray at the bedside.

It was well along toward nine in the evening, and the time was approaching when he must go back to his hotel for the night—it had been impossible for them to prepare a room for him in the old home on such short notice—when he made clear to her the details of his success and the real value of his diamonds. The effect of the pleasant news was at first all that he could have wished for. Until just before he left her, they were as happy as two children in discussing

their good luck. It was only after he had risen to lean over her bed and kiss her good night that she became half peevish and half playful.

"But how do I know," she said, "that you will not run away and leave me again? Perhaps you will take a steamer and go back to South Africa tomorrow, instead of staying here with me. Now that you are so big, and rich and bearded"—Parton still wore the bushy whiskers which were more a matter of ease and convenience than a fashion in the new country—"I am afraid that I have little influence with you."

"Small fear of my going back there, mother," said the son.

"And if you do," she went on, paying no attention to what he had just said, "how will your wonderful good fortune help me any? You will forget me again, and it will be another year or two before I shall hear anything more of you or of your diamonds!"

He gayly reassured her; but was amazed, an instant later, when she burst into tears.

"I know," she said, with a sick woman's unreasonable peevishness. "I know! You are still angry because I married Mr. MacFarren. You have never liked him, and now you will turn against me again because I have married him. It was because you resented that that you buried yourself out there at the Cape in the first place. It is because you resent that that you do not propose to share your good fortune with me now!"

"But I *do* propose to share it with you," he assured her.

"Oh! I know!" she exclaimed. "You didn't

even bring the stones up here so that I might see them!"

"Rough diamonds," he replied, "are not pretty. They are only worth seeing after they have been cut and polished. It never occurred to me that you would want to see them as they are. I can bring them to you to-morrow—I thought they would be safer in the vaults, that was all. I have not even had them carefully valued, yet. I shall have to take them to Amsterdam for that."

But she was in tears and would not listen to him.

Most men are helpless when in the presence of women's tears. He was.

It was just at this juncture, that Mac Farren came in to bid his wife good night. Parton felt annoyed and angry. It was bad enough to have to tolerate this man at all; it was especially aggravating to have him find them when his mother was in tears. MacFarren showed the greatest surprise over the situation, which, of course, Parton did not attempt to explain. He very quickly indicated that he believed that Parton was at fault. He said little, but he commiserated with his wife over her grief, without once assigning a cause for it, with one or two reproachful side glances which made Parton wild. She accepted the caresses of her husband with new sobs. The man had taken the place the son had once occupied in his mother's affections, and now she turned to him, ignoring Parton, and pressed his hands against her tear-stained cheeks in a very abandon of hysterical grief and demand for sympathy. Parton felt intensely uncomfortable and started to go away, but MacFarren stopped him with another reproachful look and gesture.

"No," said he, with accusation in his tone, "I am going now. It is strange that you should have had any differences with your mother on the first day of your return, but now that you have been so inconsiderate, you had best see her alone before you leave her for the night, so that your unhappy fault may be corrected."

Parton felt as if it would have been a joy to throttle him after this amazing speech, and did not trust himself to utter any words whatever, fearing the nature of those that would come out should his mouth once open. He merely bowed as MacFarren left the room. Then he honestly tried to appease his mother's grief and get her to forgive him, although he scarcely knew of what she thought he had been guilty. This soon appeared, however. She assumed that he had shown a painful lack of confidence in her in failing to bring his diamonds to the house to show to her. Once more she intimated that she believed that now that he had made his fortune he would probably go away from her again—she called it desert—and that he felt resentful toward her because she had married for a second time.

Finally Parton said, almost desperately:

"I wish I *had* brought the diamonds with me!"

"Why?" she asked, sobbing. "Aren't you afraid that we would have robbed you of them?"

He caught his breath.

"No. If I had brought them I could give them to you now—all of them!" he exclaimed. "Then you would not believe that I have lost my love for you and intend to go away from you again and leave you!"

This seemed to cheer her. She looked at him with almost a smile on her tear-wet face. It wrung his

heart to look at that face—it was so pinched and worn, and showed so many traces of acute suffering. He bent over her and kissed her, feeling almost as if what MacFarren had hinted had been true, and that he had really given her cause for grief.

"I will bring them to-morrow," he said, gently. "You will find that you have been mistaken. There are enough of them for both of us. I shall take you away somewhere, too, where the climate will be better for you than this endless and depressing fog is here. We will soon have you well again, and then you will realize whether I have lost my love for you or not."

This prospect pleased her, and she became quite gay. She told him that she had been unjust to him, and said that she was sorry for it. She put her arms around his neck when he leaned over her, with quite the old affection, and he was very happy. Finally when he rose to go again—and it was late and quite time that he should give her an opportunity to sleep—in a burst of tenderness and affection, he went to her small writing-table and on a sheet of newspaper, wrote out an assignment to her of his ownership in all the jewels. He took it over to her and raised her head with his arm so that she could read it.

"That will show you whether or not I intend to share my diamonds with you," he said. You see? Now, after I have sold them we will spend a part of the money together in getting you all well again, and I shall tell you of a plan which I have for making us all happier—that is, if it works out the way I hope it will."

He referred here to his hope that he might win

Norah. He had not seen her since his arrival, but by clever questioning he had induced the unsuspecting invalid to tell him that she was heart whole and fancy free, and that his mother loved her almost as she might have loved a daughter had she had one.

His mother laughed quite gayly and kissed him.

"I am so sorry that I have been peevish!" she said. "It is lying here so helpless that has made me so. You know that I had quite made up my mind that I should never see you again." She spoke very softly as she said the words that followed. "I had finally given you up for lost, and one of the things which I had hoped that I would have strength and money to do was to raise a monument to you in the old churchyard, where it would tell, within a few feet of the place where I had held you in my arms as you were christened, how much your old mother loved you after you had grown to be a man and had died in your adventuring."

It moistened Parton's eyes to hear her say this.

"Was it really so bad as that?" he asked.

"When you read my will—if you ever *read* my will—" she said, "you will find that it was drawn almost a year ago, and that there is in it provision for the building of the monument."

She kissed him again, and drew his head down to her.

"You are a dear, good boy, after all," she said. "I have been unbearable." She looked at the bit of paper which he had given to her and smiled at him fondly. "I shall put this under my pillow where I can reach it and touch it and say over and over again, 'My boy loves me! My boy loves me! My boy loves me!' when I wake up in the night in pain.

And to-morrow, when you come to me with the gems to show me, we shall tear it up and laugh together at this to-night old woman and her pettishness. And you won't blame me at all, but will kiss me and lay it to my illness, and we shall be very happy, Henry.

"But," she added, playfully, "you must remember that if you want any of your diamonds during the night, you must come here and ask me for them. For just to-night they are not yours, you know. They are all mine until the morning!"

And Parton was quite happy as he went away.

CHAPTER THREE

A SHATTERING OF PLEASANT PLANS

It's on th' sunshiniest days that you want to be prepared for th' worst storms. Them that jumps at you right out o' th' heart o' fair weather, is th' dang'rousest of all.—The Logbook of The Lyddy.

It was not later than ten in the morning when Parton again presented himself at his mother's house. Norah and not the maid answered the ringing of the bell. She had just come in from the country, and if his memories of her had been brilliant, he saw that the reality was more so. He had often wondered how they would act at this first meeting after she had told him that she could not marry him, and had feared that the affair would be a bit embarrassing; but she made it a very simple matter. She was unaffectedly gladdened by the sight of him—he could not doubt the genuineness of her pleasure, the real cordiality of her hand, clasp, the truth of the delight that shone in her wonderful eyes. But she had changed! The prettiness of the girl had passed into a glorified beauty of young maturity. He almost gasped at sight of her. But before six words had passed between them, she had him at his ease. She laid her finger on her lips with a gesture of caution.

“Whist!” said she. “Your mother is asleep, dear lady!”

The little Irishism charmed him. An honest man may be the noblest work of God, but a beautiful and cultivated Irish woman with just a little taste, like,

of the brogue, is far and away the most captivating. Then she led the way into the partially darkened little drawing-room, and they compared notes in eager half-whispers for a time. He told her that he had merely come around to see that the excitement of his coming had not harmed his mother, and that he had much to do during the day. She looked at his heavy beard and laughed, noiselessly.

"Sure!" said she. "I could think that most of the work would be for the barber, not for you. I'm fair afraid of you!"

"Mother hinted that last night," he said. "But I'm too glad to see you to really be dangerous."

He knew that he grinned constantly like an idiot child; but when he tried to smooth his face and make the corners of his mouth lie straight, he could not do it. Failing, he told her of the trouble, and that quite delighted her. She said she had been having similar distress herself.

An idea came to him.

"Won't you come with me and act as my guide?" he asked. "You know I am a stranger to London, now. There are only four or five places that I must go to. We can do it all in an hour or two, and be back here by the time mother is ready to see us."

"But, I haven't breakfasted," she protested. If I had waited for it I should have missed the train in, and—I didn't want to miss the train. Aunt Anna telegraphed to me that you were here last night, and I was—anxious like, to see you."

This speech pleased Parton when he caught its meaning. At first he had not quite understood whom she referred to when she said "Aunt Anna," but then he remembered that his mother's name was

Anna and that she must mean her. He had not heard her spoken of as "Anna" since his father's death. It delighted him. But pleasanter was the confession that she had been anxious to see him. Also the fact that she had not breakfasted offered an opportunity. He lied bravely in order to grasp it.

"That is sheer good luck," he said. "I am as hungry as a bear, myself. Come along and we will eat together at the Savoy. I must go there," he looked at his watch, "very soon anyway. There will be some one there whom I shall wish to see. And I must make haste."

He threw this in to clinch the matter and make events move rapidly, salving his conscience with the reflection that if Norah went, *she* would be there. And certainly he wished to see her!

She demurred for a moment, but finally consented. He left a message to be given to his mother when she awoke saying that they would return in time to have late luncheon with her.

After the maid had whistled for a hansom and they had climbed into it, Norah looked him over critically as they jogged through the Green Park. Parton had stolen a moment's talk with the man and promised him an extra shilling if he drove slowly.

"I should not have recognized you at all," she said, smiling. "Faith! You're all hair like a barbarian in a Stanley Weyman novel, I should not dare to breakfast with you while you look like that. You must go and be shorn at once. I could have no appetite at all sitting opposite so much fierce whisker. It would frighten it away from me."

This matter was discussed and agreed upon, Norah

giving him minute directions as to how she wished to have him have his beard trimmed. But she was not satisfied with that. She had the driver pass slowly along close to the sidewalk, until she saw a man who wore his in the fashion that she had decided upon for Parton, and pointing him out and using him for an explanatory lay figure until Parton said that the man would notice it and go mad with conceit, she made him promise to tell the barber all about it.

"After that has been done," she said, laughing, "you will be less terrifying." She glanced at him mischievously. "I almost think," she said, "that you may be very nearly—handsome!"

Then, rapidly and in a way that charmed him—she said it as if she were reciting a lesson—she answered his questions by giving him a more or less connected narrative of her life and doings since he had gone away. It was not an exciting story, but its interest was intense—for Parton. As soon as she had finished, she told him that his turn had come, and listened attentively while he told a very modest tale of his efforts and success.

"And so, like the youth in the fairy tale," she said, after he had declared that there was no more to tell, "you have come back with a ship load of jewels and gems! Faith! I am very glad! But the youth in the fairy tale found a beautiful princess in the mountains where the jewels were, and brought her home, too! How about your princess?"

There was a serious gleam in Parton's eyes which made her flinch a little as he looked at her and replied:

"We must be thinking of different fairy tales," he said. "The one that I remember told how the youth

took his treasure home with him and laid it at the feet of the princess whom he had loved before he went away—the very cruel princess who was so dazzlingly beautiful, you know, and who had refused to marry him."

The color flamed up in her cheeks and she glanced at him with nothing more than a flash from the eyes under the long lashes.

"I shall not go to breakfast with you if you get your fairy tales all wrong," she said. But a moment later she added: "Still I am glad that the mountains where you found your diamonds were quite free of princesses." She laughed. "The ones that grow in Africa are generally so—black, you know!"

At the Savoy she sent him to the barber's first; but said that she should order the breakfast while she waited for him. This he declared was unfair, for it would greatly decrease his time at table with her; but she was obdurate. The barber to whose tender mercies he intrusted himself was quite excited by the offer of an extra half-crown if the work was quickly done, and Parton joined her at the little table which she had chosen in the gallery overlooking the embankment in an astonishingly short time. His great bush of whiskers had been changed into a neatly pointed affair which made him feel rather foolish, but she looked him over critically as the man brought breakfast, and pronounced the improvement to be marked.

Her gaze wandered downward to his rough and ill-fitting suit of tweeds—the best that he had been able to get quickly in Cape Town—and she declared that after they had finished their meal she should go with him to a tailor. He hailed this announce-

ment with much joy. He would have sung in his soul, that morning, if she had told him that she should go with him to an undertaker's so that he might be measured for a shroud. What he was measured for did not interest him at all. It was the idea that she was to be with him while it happened.

She had ordered an exceedingly good breakfast, and he nobly attempted to eat of it; but the fact that before he had left his hotel he had consumed mutton chops and sundries satisfying even to the appetite of a sturdy young Englishman in a London grill room for almost the first time after a five years' absence, prevented him from doing very well with it. She protested and then she guessed.

"It was very wicked of you," she averred, "but, sure, there was all the more for me and I was very hungry. Still, it was deception."

She was deeply interested in everything he told her about his work and its rewards, and by the time that they had left the table and gone to a tailor on Bond Street (she assured him that a young man so rich as he was would be committing crimes if he ordered clothes on any other thoroughfare), he was even more her abject slave than he had been before. And she knew it. Once or twice he came very near to blurting out the statement that he had devoted most of his idle moments in South Africa to thinking about her; but he wisely curbed his tongue. She was fascinating in that tailor's shop. That the very polite attendant believed that they were newly married, dawned on them at almost the same moment, and, while she flushed brilliantly as she caught Parton's eyes, she made a merry little motion and a moment later showed by an evidently carefully designed re-

mark that she enjoyed the joke. From that time on she did many things to foster the man's mistake. She showed anxious interest about the selections of cloth and choice of patterns. She gravely discussed especial needs. She debated concerning prices in a way which filled Parton with a vast and satisfying joy. All this was done with punctuation of side glances so bewitching that it was with an effort that he prevented himself from clutching for her hand when the man for an instant turned away, or doing something else equally absurd. Finally, when, as they were leaving the shop, the man called them back to look at one more piece of goods, she turned to Parton with eyes brimming with merriment, but with her face screwed up into a pretty semblance of a speculative frown and said, gravely:

“Sure, my dear, I really think you ought to take it!”

It almost floored him. He very nearly tumbled to his knees there in the tailor shop with the salesman as a witness, and asked her to reconsider her decision and marry him without delay. She saw it coming, though, and fled from the place, leaving him to settle the remainder of the business alone with the shopkeeper.

She was rosy and laughing when he joined her on the street, and before she would let him call a hansom, she made him promise to be on his good behavior while they drove.

“Faith!” said she, “I’ll never drive home with you at all, unless you promise to say nothing foolish to me after we are in the cab. The spell is broken now that we have left the magic tailor shop, you

know. Somehow that place in there seemed just a bit bewitched-like!"

Parton suggested quickly that they should go back to it. He declared that he was wholly willing to order quite unheard of quantities of clothes in such a blessed spot. But she refused.

"Do you suppose that I shall let you spend all your diamonds on clothes?" she asked of him. "If I should be so foolish, where would the princess get her silks and satins from?"

From the tailor's shop they drove to the office of the Safety Deposit company where he had stored his diamonds. She waited for him in the cab while he went in to get the belt, and when he came out again, she told him that he must not wear it after he had the new waistcoats which they had ordered that morning, because it would spoil their fit. It even made the loose and somewhat blousy product of the Cape Town tailor which he then had on, seem more ill fitting than it had been.

They drove to the house near Russell Square in the very highest spirits. As they were again passing through the Green Park he once more came dangerously near to an avowal; but she stopped him quickly by telling him that he must not prove false to the African princess whom she felt sure that he had left behind him. When he kept on in spite of this joking warning, she sobered, although it was evidently hard for her to do so, and, turning her fine eyes full upon him in spite of the flushing cheeks which came with the steady look, told him that she was really serious and that he must not talk of such things then. For a moment he was frightened and he begged her very earnestly to tell him if her prohibition came

because some other had forestalled him. She laughed at this right rosily, and said "no" in such a way that his earnest worry was appeased.

"You must remember," she said, half laughing and half serious, "that we need to get acquainted all over again." She added, an instant later: "Five years have changed me wonderfully, perhaps they have changed you, too."

"Changed me!" he exclaimed. "If I thought they had not, I should not dare to hope at all. You know you said that you could never marry the boy who went away. I am only hoping that you will think differently of the man who has come back."

"You are breaking your promise," she said, warningly; but women have given more severe reproofs to men than she did then to him.

As they approached the house a gig moved away to make room for them to drive up, and she remarked that the doctor had come much earlier than usual and that she was sorry that she had not been there to receive him.

"Aunt Anna always likes to have me with her when I am in London, to remember his directions; but he generally does not come until almost four o'clock," she said.

While Parton paid the driver she ran up the steps and rang the bell. His back was turned to her as the door was opened, and as he hurried after her he did not look up at her, being busy with his coin case. But he knew, indefinitely, that the maid had come to the door and opened it, and said something to her. He was almost at the top of the steps when he heard her gasp and then give a little, choking sob. He looked up quickly and saw that she had stepped back

until she was leaning against the door-post with a face from which all the rich color that he had so admired had fled, while the maid stood in the doorway holding her little ruffled apron to her eyes.

In a moment he had learned the truth. Mrs. Mac-Farren had slept much more soundly than she usually did, and when the nurse returned from her morning airing she had found her, apparently, still sleeping. The shades were drawn at the windows of the sick-room, and so she did not see her face; but the length of the sleep alarmed her, and she put her hand on the patient's shoulder, only to find that the poor lady's sleep was that of death.

CHAPTER FOUR

A MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE

The reason that most of us don't make even bigger fools of ourselves than we do, is that somethin' that we don't noways deserve the credit of, comes along and stops us—mebbe against our will an' while we grumble at it.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

The three days that followed passed, as even the most dreadful days will pass. The tragedy had been so unexpected and formed so black a contrast to bright plans, that Parton's gloom seemed doubly sombre. Norah took charge of affairs at the house with a quiet competence which was as comforting as it was surprising. Parton's journey to Holland, where he had intended to dispose of the diamonds, was, of course, postponed. Indeed, in these troublous days he almost forgot the fortune locked up in the vaults.

He saw MacFarren several times daily, and there were details of the man's manner which did not tend to increase his liking for him, although he felt that respect for his dead mother demanded of him that he should show no enmity for the man whom she had chosen for her husband. He could not complain that MacFarren did not show grief—that he was honestly and deeply affected by his wife's death could not be doubted; but he exhibited a kind of groping, spying greed about everything connected with the house and what was in it that annoyed Parton.

It was the day after the funeral that the will was formally read and Parton was not surprised to find

that his mother had bequeathed almost everything to her husband, and he was touched to tears when he heard the paragraph providing that a certain sum to be realized from the sale of her few jewels should be used for the erection of a tablet to the memory of her beloved son, who, she supposed, at the time when she made her will, had died in South Africa. That she had not altered the document after his return was, of course, the thing that was to have been expected. Indeed, it would have been astonishing if she had thought to do so. No premonition of impending death had warned her. He thought very little about the matter. His mother's estate, he reflected, could not amount to much, sadly decreased as it had been by MacFarren's bad management. He was entirely satisfied that MacFarren should get what there was left of it, because his mother had loved him and believed in him.

Finally it became necessary for him to take up the thread of his plans again for rearrangement where they had been dropped at the signal of the tragedy. The first thing to be done was to dispose of his diamonds, for his supply of ready money was getting low, and he resolved to carry out, at once, that delayed trip to the Holland markets. After that, he thought, he would go into the country for a time, visiting such places as harbored sweet associations of his youth by his mother's side, and then return to London for a space before planning definitely for the future. Of course, he said nothing more, then, to Norah of the things that had been hinted at in their merry talk on the morning that his mother died. She was almost as grief stricken as he was himself.

He was a little puzzled by the fact that he could not discover that any one had found the assignment of his diamonds which he had given to his mother during their last evening together; but he thought little of this. In the excitement that came with the discovery of her unexpected death and the turmoil that naturally ensued in the death-chamber, it had, apparently and not very astonishingly, disappeared. The diamonds he had again placed on deposit in the vaults from which he had taken them on the day of his mother's death.

The morning of the day before he was to start for Holland he was mildly surprised to receive an invitation from MacFarren to dine at the old home. He had been there very little since the funeral. Once or twice he had called to take Norah, sad-eyed and silent, for a little drive, but the associations of the house were inexpressibly sorrowful to him. He accepted MacFarren's invitation, however, as a matter of decent courtesy.

Before the dinner had much more than begun, Parton saw that Norah and her uncle were not on the best of terms. More than once MacFarren spoke to her with a touch of sarcasm in his voice, although he evidently made an effort to appear courteous, and Parton reflected with satisfaction that no real relationship could exist between the beautiful, sincere, highly cultivated and brilliant Irish girl and the gray-haired, beetle-browed, harsh-voiced and coarse-featured man who had been the husband of her aunt. During the progress of the meal she did not look at him at all unless circumstances forced it, and when she did, Parton believed that he could see disgust and dislike in every glance she gave him. It did not detract

at all from her beauty—he reflected that nothing could do that—but he was glad that her expression changed when she looked at him. She was very pale, and her face showed that she was weary. The brilliant bloom had been driven from her cheeks by the sorrows of the recent days, and Parton felt that a new bond had been established between them by her great and sincere grief over his mother's death, just as he had found ground for a new dislike of MacFarren in the fact that he seemed to have suffered little because of it, and had apparently been able to take up ordinary interests at about the same place where his wife's death had forced him to drop them.

One of the things which astonished Parton during the early moments of this dinner was the interest which MacFarren seemed to take in his South African experiences. Parton's mind was full of Norah and of planning for the future, and it was hard for him to assume an interest in the rough days which he had passed in the wilderness. He only spoke of them because MacFarren led the conversation back to them whenever it had wandered. But the occasional instants when his eager eyes met Norah's were compensations for the weariness of the barrister's talk, and it was a real sorrow for him when she arose and said that she must leave them to their own devices for the remainder of the evening, as she was to pass the night with a friend.

She gave her hand to Parton in a very cordial manner, and for a moment there flickered on her lips a brighter smile than he had seen there since his mother's death; but this pleasant expression changed quickly to a look of worry which he could not understand. It seemed to him that there was something

which she wished to say to him and could not, and the quick side-glance which she shot at MacFarren gave him the impression that it was his presence which prevented her. He felt, also, that she held his hand an instant longer than was necessary and that before she took her own away from it there was something very like a meaning pressure of her fingers over his, but of this he was not certain. No explanation of these matters came to him, and she said good night and left the room.

After she had gone, Parton's interest died utterly, and he answered questions, but did little else. Most of them were about South Africa, but Colonial reminiscence was quite overshadowed in his mind by sad reveries, and when he replied to MacFarren he did so in terms which, had he stopped to think, he would have known must be almost unintelligible to a man unfamiliar with the technicalities of mining life. He did not notice a somewhat unpleasant eagerness in the old man's voice when he asked him about the stones which he had brought home with him, and, instead of approximating their worth as he might very well and with fair accuracy have done, he merely said that he had not gone over them carefully with experts, and could not, therefore, express a good opinion.

"I thought," said MacFarren, "that in speaking of them to your poor mother, you said that you thought they were worth somewhere in the neighborhood of sixty thousand pounds."

"I may have said that," said Parton, carelessly, "but it is all more or less guesswork until they have been studied and their quality determined. It is very unsafe to guess at the value of a rough diamond."

An unsuspected flaw might cut its worth in half, while an equally unsuspected purity, developed in the cutting, might double it."

"And I suppose," said MacFarren, "that you could go back there and get as many more."

"God forbid!" said Parton, and he said something about the hardships that he had endured, and the fact that similar quests had failed utterly in hundreds of cases.

He tried to change the subject, but MacFarren stuck to it as a puppy sticks to an old shoe. After they had been alone together perhaps fifteen minutes, MacFarren asked him, point-blank, where he had put the diamonds after he had come to London. Parton was about to answer him carelessly, stating that they were in the Royal Union vaults, when the conversation was interrupted by Norah, who was garbed for the street, and who came in with an envelope in her hand. She seemed to be careful to stand between Parton and MacFarren, and the fact that MacFarren rose just after she entered to get a light for his cigar, made it possible for her to hide Parton's face completely from him for a second. During that second she said, under her breath, so that Parton could barely hear and MacFarren could not hear at all:

"Careful!"

And, as she said the word, she handed the envelope to him, saying, as she did so, in her natural tone:

"The messenger is waiting for an answer. If you will tell me 'yes' or 'no,' which is what he says he wants, I will tell him."

Parton, surprised as much by her manner as by the fact that a message had been sent to him there instead of at his hotel, glanced quickly at the en-

velope. Written plainly on the face in addition to the address, were the words:

"Do not let M. see this."

He opened the envelope hastily, and saw an unsigned note, written in a feminine hand which was familiar to him, although he could not definitely identify it. He wondered, afterwards, why he had not recognized it at once. The note said:

"I shall wait for you in a cab around the corner. Come as quickly as you can. Say nothing to M. about the diamonds. If he finds where they are, you are likely to lose them."

He looked up at her quickly. She had not given him time to rise, so hurried had been her entrance and the presentation of the note. Her eyes were fixed earnestly on his.

"Shall I tell the messenger 'yes,' or 'no,'" she asked, again.

"Tell him 'yes,' if you please," said Parton.

Almost before he had said it she leaned forward and, to his surprise, took the note from his relaxed fingers, and hurried out of the room, still keeping it. And even after she had gone he still wondered who had sent the note!

CHAPTER FIVE

AN UNEXPECTED CRISIS

A man that makes mistakes ain't allus, a plum fool. Sometimes he's jest a-sufferin' from too much fate. An' them, th' chap that never makes 'em ain't half so cute as him that makes 'em but hustles an' corrects 'em quick enough to keep his enemies from takin' of advantages.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

After Norah's exit, MacFarren showed no signs that he had seen anything unusual in the fact that a note, to which the messenger had been instructed to get an answer, had come to Parton there. He tried to keep up some talk about the jewels—Parton now saw the eagerness of the effort—but the younger man parried it. He did not in the least understand the warning that had come in the note, but he decided that it could do no harm to heed it. He managed to avoid MacFarren's questions as to where the diamonds were at present without appearing to be rude, and, finally, contrived to get away without having made any statement concerning the place of their deposit.

Having reached the street, he suddenly realized that the note had been indefinite in its directions. It had said that the writer would wait for him in a cab around the corner, but there were, because of the irregular arrangement of the streets in this part of London, three corners which might have been meant. He turned the one which was most convenient to the house. There was a cab ranks there with three

vehicles waiting upon it. He did not think it likely that his correspondent could have meant that he would wait for him in a cab on a public ranks, but he passed by them all, and, amidst the importunities of their drivers, peered into each one of them. Two were empty. In the third he caught a glimpse of a policeman's helmet, and from the window heard the peaceful pulsing of a comfortable snore. That could not be the one that he was looking for. He turned about and went to the second corner. There was no cab there at all. In order for him to reach the third, it was necessary for him to pass the house again, and, as he did so, the front door was open. MacFarren stood there in the bright light which streamed from the entrance hall, and, as he glanced up at him, shouted to him to wait. Parton was annoyed by this, but he could scarcely refuse to do as his step-father asked, and MacFarren joined him on the sidewalk at the foot of the steps.

"I always take a turn or two in the air before I go to bed," he said. "I find that I sleep the better for it. But why are you walking around here? I thought you had to hurry away to keep an appointment."

Parton explained, quite truthfully, that he was searching for a cab and that those on the ranks which he had just quitted did not suit him. This was not unreasonable. The London "night-hawks" which wait on the stands in the residential districts are likely to be melancholy as to horses and drivers and musty as to upholstery. It annoyed Parton to have MacFarren join him; but he could not very well refuse to let him walk with him. Still, the writer of the note had seemed to be especially anxious

that the lawyer should know nothing of the events of that night. He scarcely knew what to do about it. If he walked directly to the cab-stand it might be the means of leading MacFarren directly to the discovery of something—he could not guess what—which it were better for him not to know; but he had told him that he was searching for a cab, and there was nothing for him to do but go directly about the business of finding one. If he took time to shake MacFarren off, his unknown correspondent might tire of waiting for him.

"By the way," said MacFarren. "Do you think you could postpone your trip to Holland for a day?"

"Why?" asked Parton, surprised.

"You know there are several matters of business relating to your late dear mother's will, which we shall have to consult about and settle up," said MacFarren. "I had hoped to get them all arranged, so that we could discuss them to-night, but I could not do it."

"If it will really be an accommodation to you," said Parton, unsuspectingly, "I can wait. There is no real need for hurrying, although I must admit that I am a bit short for ready cash."

"Draw on me for any small sums which you may need," said MacFarren with what he tried to make a genial smile. "Of course," he added, with a deprecatory gesture, which Parton believed to be hypocritical, "I have not much; but what I have is at your service."

"Thank you," said Parton, dryly. "I am not so short that I shall have to borrow, I think."

"Time was passing, and Parton went directly toward the third cab stand. A single vehicle was stand-

ing a few paces in advance of the regular rank, and Parton felt certain that this must be the one in which the author of the note was waiting for him. His opinion was confirmed when he saw that the driver, who was on the sidewalk, whip in hand, began to button his coat as if in preparation for departure when he saw him coming.

"Ah!" said Parton to MacFarren. "That must be the cab which was sent after me. Stupid of the fellow not to have waited in front of the house. Good night!"

MacFarren shook hands with him, but, walked along at his side. The driver opened the door of the cab as they approached, and, stepping up to it with MacFarren close at his heels, Parton peered within. A street lamp cast a dim light upon the one person who was sitting on the seat. It was a woman! She had sunk back into a corner of the cab and was holding a bit of her cape before her eyes as if to shield them from the street lamp's soft glow. As his head appeared at the door of the vehicle, the raised cape was dropped for a second, and, to his amazement, he saw the face of Norah. At the same instant she caught a glimpse of his companion, and quickly raised the cape again. It was plain that she had no wish to have MacFarren know that she was there. Parton even thought she gave a little gasp as she recognized his companion; but of that he was not sure. He himself was astonished beyond measure. He could not imagine what it could have been which would have led her to this unusual way of getting a moment's talk with him; what it could be which she had to communicate to him which must be so carefully concealed from her uncle. That the matter was

other than of the first importance he could not doubt. That it had anything to do with sentimental affairs he did not imagine for an instant. No one who had once seen Norah MacFarren would believe her capable of such an escapade as this would be were it planned without a serious and important purpose. Parton looked at MacFarren quickly to see if he had recognized the occupant of the cab; but he saw on his face only an amused smile such as an elderly man of not too high ideals might wear when he caught some younger friend in a bit of sentimental nonsense. It made Parton boil to see such a look on his face in connection with anything with which Norah was concerned; but it was better than it would have been if he had really guessed the identity of the fair second party to Parton's rendezvous. Without a word, but with a gesture of mock reproach which was intended to be playful and which greatly infuriated Parton, the barrister drew away and said good night again.

After the cab had started and before he had ventured a word to his companion, Parton heard strange sounds from behind the cape which hid her face. For a moment he thought that they were sobs, but then he recognized the bubblings of laughter half suppressed. When Norah lowered the protecting garment, he could see by the dim light that she was trying to restrain a very vivid amusement. But she quickly sobered.

"Sure," said she, "that was the nearest approach to the beginning of a scandal in the family, that I have ever been a party to!"

Then she added, and her face was serious enough as she said it, with just enough Irish on her tongue to make it very pleasant:

"Are you sure that he did not recognize me? Faith! my heart was in my mouth."

"He didn't see you," said Parton, comfortingly. "If he had he would have said something about it."

"No," said Norah, "it's everything he would have said, I'm thinkin'. But I won't worry any more about it. I must have half a whisper of talk with you and then slip back by the servants' gate to my friend's house. Tell the man to drive somewhere where it's quiet, won't you?"

Parton did so.

"Now where are those diamonds of yours?" she asked.

He began to speak, but she stopped him.

"No, no!" she said, laughing. "It's that that I don't want to know. Perhaps that's why I asked it first of all. Don't tell, me, please. What I wanted to ask you was, have you told *him* where they are?"

"No," said Parton, "I haven't. I should have, though, if it had not been for that note which now I know was yours."

"Praises be!" said Norah. "Then, anyway, I'm of *some* use in the world!"

"Won't you tell me what it all means?" asked Parton.

"I'll tell you," said Norah, "and I'm praying that I'm not telling you too late. You gave your poor mother an assignment of them, didn't you?"

Parton assented and added that he had intended to ask MacFarren about it that night, but had forgotten to do so. He had not thought that it was of much importance. He had given it to her to humor her because she was ill. "I wonder," he said, "if any

one found it. Poor mother put it under her pillow, just before I left her for the last time."

"He found it," said Norah. "Don't you see? That is what I was so anxious to see you about. He found it and has it now. Do you understand what that means?"

Parton started. He began to understand.

"That is why I warned you not to tell him where the stones are now," she went on. You see, by the terms of your mother's will, all her personal property goes to him—and by the terms of that assignment, all your diamonds were her personal property!"

"But he would never—" Parton began.

"That he would, faith!" she interrupted, and even in the midst of the serious thoughts which what she had said called up in him, Parton noticed the little Irishism, and reflected that it was very agreeable when it came from her lips, although similar Hibernicisms had never seemed especially admirable to him from others.

She continued:

"It's a hard thing to say of my uncle—but he's only the husband of my dead aunt. He's no more my uncle than he is your father, and we may both feel happier when we remember that he's neither."

There was a bit of a twist which she gave to the emphasis of this statement which made Parton laugh in spite of the seriousness of the subject of conversation.

"He must think that I have some of the same outrageous blood in me that makes him what he is," she went on, "for he has taken me into his confidence. He seemed to think I'd like him better for it. I tried to make him think I did; but succeeded only fairly.

He's suspicious of my sincerity. Just before you came this evening, he showed me the assignment and told me that he intended to make you live up to it. He said that if the case should go to court you might possibly get a share of the estate—and the estate, mind you, is your diamonds—but that under the will the major part of it would go to him. And then—Oh, the rascally old conspirator!—he said that he had no doubt that you would want it to, inasmuch as it was your mother's wish! Your mother's wish! Dear woman! If she had not thought that you were dead she would not have named him in her will at all, I'm thinking!"

All this had amazed Parton greatly. Now that he began to see what the foxy old barrister's game was, however, he smiled a little. He did not know much about the law, but he felt calmly certain that it would never uphold any such cold-blooded appropriation of another's man's property as this would be. It was, perhaps, a serious situation, but—Norah was even more delightful as she sat there indignant for his sake than she had ever seemed before.

"I was afraid," the girl went on rapidly, "that he would have done something about it to-night; but, you see, so long as he does not know where the stones are, he is a bit timid about letting you know what is in his mind. He is fearful that you will disappear with them. But you cannot afford to waste a moment before you do what you can to prevent him from robbing you. He told me himself that if you did not promise to-night to delay your trip to Holland, he should to-morrow serve you with papers demanding the production of the diamonds, so that you could not dispose of them. Then, he will try to force

you to hand over the lion's share of them to him by plain bulldozing, and, failing in that, get what he can by the law."

Parton slowly filled with wrath as he saw the trap which his generous impulse toward his mother had been built into since her death. He grinned sarcastically to himself when he remembered that that very evening he had wondered if he had not misjudged MacFarren, and if he ought not to try to feel more kindly toward him!

"He's a lawyer himself," said Norah, "and he'd not be likely to try anything that he thought the law would not uphold him in. He must know that you or any other man would fight such a thing in the courts, and if he had any notion that they would not help him in his claims, it isn't likely he would think of trying them."

Parton began another question.

"He told me definitely," she said with emphasis, "that he was having papers drawn up to-day and that he intended to begin operations to-morrow afternoon if you did not do as he told you to. Sure, he made me so angry with his talk about you that we made a quarrel of it then and there."

"I thought," said Parton, "that you did not seem to feel very cordial towards each other at dinner-time."

"Cordial!" said Norah, "would you be likely to smile and pass jokes about the weather with a man who came to you and said that he had in mind the robbery of a person whom you—whom—you liked?"

Her hesitation over the verb pleased Parton.

"Don't you see why he asked you to wait a bit before you went to Holland?"

This seemed very plain to Parton when he thought about it.

"You—have been very good to take all this trouble about it—about me," he said.

She laughed a little.

Parton pondered for a moment.

"I'll see a lawyer whom I know, to-night," he said.
"I'll go now—as soon as I have taken you home."

He would have known that she looked at him reproachfully if there had been more light there in the cab.

"Please see him before you do that," said Norah. "I never could sleep at all until I knew what he had said to you. I won't be missed, you know. I told him that I should spend the night with Christine MacDonald. He won't expect me back. I've telegraphed Christie that I'm coming late. She'll never be surprised at anything I do—we were at school together. Take me with you to the lawyer's. I'll wait outside here in the cab. Then you can tell me what says and I'll feel better. If he says what I'm afraid he will, I'll have a chance to say good-by to you, anyway."

"Say good-by, to me?" said Parton, quickly and inquiringly. He was far from anxious to have her say good-by to him. "Why? Shan't I see you tomorrow?"

"If he says what I'm fearing that he'll say," she answered, "I'm afraid that you won't be in London."

And he understood. He looked at her and found that her bright eyes met his unflinchingly in the dim light in the cab. She was an extraordinary girl—and he was more in love with her than ever, now that he knew that she expected him to flee from London

with the diamonds rather than let them fall into MacFarren's hands.

"I am proud of myself for having *asked* you to marry me, anyway," he said.

"Hush!" said Norah. "You mustn't talk about it, or I'll have to leave you after all, and then I'd miss the fun. It would be unfair to me!"

After a moment she went on as if there had been no interruption of her talk.

"You see," she said, "if things are as bad as I'm fearing that they are, he will have everything all ready to nab you after four or five in the afternoon, and perhaps earlier than that, with some paper signed by a justice whom he can blarney into giving it, calling on you to produce the diamonds. If you went away after he had served that on you, you would be not only disappointing him; but you would be defying the court itself—and that would be contempt! Or, if he didn't take that course, he would find out where the diamonds are and have the people there forbidden to give them up to anyone until the merits of the case are settled by the courts. Then, you see, if he should be able to twist the situation until he could make the courts think that he had the right of it, you would be wholly helpless. Oh, I haven't lived with him these years for nothing!"

"If I ever get into any trouble with the law," said Parton, in a smiling interval between bitter thoughts about MacFarren, "I shall engage you to defend me before the jury."

Parton knew few lawyers in London. One had had charge of his mother's affairs before she had met MacFarren, and he decided to go to him. Before he had reached Maida Vale, where he lived,

however, it was late and there were no lights shining from the windows of his house. The servant who finally came to answer the repeated ringing at the door was not good-natured. At first he refused to waken his master; but at last that gentleman himself appeared in his pajamas at the head of the stairs and demanded to know what the noise was all about. When he saw Parton and heard who he was he came down with alacrity, barefooted and dressed for bed as he was. He shook hands with enthusiasm, but there was something about the man which Parton did not like. His memory of him had been somewhat dim, and the oily, obsequious details of his manner had been quite forgotten during the lapse of years. Then, too, instead of the quick and emphatic statement that MacFarren was wholly in the wrong, which Parton had expected, he hemmed and hawed and quite soed until Parton regretted having gone to him. He showed a peering, prying curiosity about the value of the stones rather than about the details of his would-be client's case that was annoying to the young man, and reminded him of MacFarren's own anxiety about them. Parton suddenly stopped talking of them, and decided to go elsewhere for advice, although he said that he would see the man again upon the morrow. It would have been difficult for him to have said why it was so, but he was feeling angry and dissatisfied. He had had no direct statement as to what the man believed the rights of the case were.

"I will take your case," the lawyer protested, quickly, as he saw that Parton's antagonism had been aroused. "Perhaps I can get MacFarren to

give you a part of the property. Anyway, I will take your case."

Parton was not pleased by this suggestion that MacFarren had any justice in his claim whatever.

"Well, perhaps," said Parton, and started for the door.

The lawyer seemed to be distressed by this movement and followed him, even standing shivering in his pajamas after the door was opened and the cold air had begun to come in from the outside.

"By the way," he said, with such a careful carelessness that it flashed through Parton's mind that it was assumed, "you haven't told me where the diamonds are on deposit."

The question was so like the one which MacFarren had put to him, and the tone was so similar to that his step-father had used, that it almost startled Parton. He looked keenly at the lawyer, and there began to come into his eyes that expression before which Black had learned to quail in South Africa. He surveyed the shaking little man slowly from his bare feet to the top of his bald head.

"No," he said. "I haven't."

"Well?" said the lawyer.

"Good night," said Parton.

"But," said the lawyer, edging himself between Parton and the door with a reckless disregard of the consequences which might come from exposure to the night air, "if I am to take your case——"

"You are not to take my case," said Parton.

As the lawyer looked at him in great disappointment, he caught the glint of those gray eyes, and stammered out "good night," in evident disappointment and confusion.

"What did he say?" asked Norah, after the cab had started.

Parton told her. She was puzzled. Then she spoke quickly.

"Who was he?" she asked. "You haven't told me what his name is. That's funny, but you haven't."

"Pierson," said Parton.

"Charles Pierson?" asked Norah, with a little gasp.

"Yes," said Parton.

"Oh, I ought to have told you before!" she exclaimed. "It was he who introduced Mr. MacFarren to your mother."

"Yes," said Parton.

"And they are now in partnership!" said Norah.

Parton hesitated, then he laughed.

"Well, he didn't learn much, anyway," he said.

"What are you to do now?" asked Norah. "He will probably tell MacFarren that you are planning to fight him, and that will make them hurry with their work. It will give you less time than you had before."

Parton's manner had so changed when he spoke to her that she looked up at him in surprise, but the expression which she saw dimly on his face did not decrease her admiration for him. Indeed, that admiration was beginning to amount almost to what Parton wished to have it grow to.

"Unless something that I do not expect turns up, it will give me all the time I want," he said.

"What shall you do?" she asked.

"Get the diamonds as soon as the vaults are open in the morning," Parton said, slowly. "Take them

and go somewhere where he can't get at me until I've had time to put them quite beyond his reach in some way. Tell him to go somewhere else—to a place which it would be impolite for me to mention to you."

She looked up at him with something which was still nearer to the look he longed to see.

"And when you say good-bye——," she said, but had no time to finish.

"No, I shall not wait," said Parton, and kissed her there and then.

CHAPTER SIX

A FLIGHT IN THE FOG

It sometimes takes a better man to get his vessel out o' dock, than it would to sail her 'cross th' ocean.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

The problem presented to Parton was a strange one. That he was by every moral right the owner of the diamonds which he had toiled so hard and perilously to find he did not doubt; but that the law might doubt it he learned early on the following morning when he chose a lawyer more carefully and consulted him. What he said confirmed the determination which the young man had half formed the night before and which he had told Norah of. He was assured that the courts might give him relief from the claims of MacFarren—but he was also informed that they might not. He learned then, as many other men have learned in many other circumstances as distressing, that, while the law is supposed to be the most rigid of all the results of human effort and most certain to bring justice, it is, in reality, a rubber thing that will expand with every clever pull of skilful people, or shrink where least expected, at some properly selected word. After careful consultation with an attorney whose eminence assured him of his wisdom, he found that, while MacFarren's claim would be a most unusual one, and might possibly be thrown out by the courts, there was still much likelihood that it might be up-

held so that Parton's diamonds would become the property of the cute old Irishman, despite the quite obvious merits of the case. This lawyer saw the dangers of the situation and warned Parton of them. He assured him that if he once gave MacFarren time to put a process under way which would bring the actual property into litigation, it would then pass into the guardianship of the court, and he who interfered with it before a decision was in due time rendered would be offending, not the other party to the quarrel alone, but all the majesty of British law. Possession was a great thing. Parton had the jewels now—he ought to keep them. At this point the lawyer (who had been assured of a cash and fat fee) smiled gently, and Parton understood. The fee was paid and Parton left the legal habitat.

He was worried. Who would not have been? He was frightened in a way. He realized that, very likely, he was planning to be technically a thief as he climbed the steps which led to the offices of the Safety Deposit Company, and he had not been used to look on thieves with favor, nor did he think their roads were easy ones to travel.

But his principal fear was that MacFarren had, in some way, learned the whereabouts of the stones and that already some word might have been sent there warning the officials that they were not to be delivered to him; but he was greeted by the person to whom he stated the nature of his visit with evident respect, and this reassured him. He had in his hand a large black travelling bag, pasted with such labels as only come from much journeying abroad. His railway and steamship wanderings could have been traced through them with fair accuracy by an

expert. It was the well-worn satchel of a man who has travelled competently and much. He did not leave it in the office; but carried it along when he entered the dimly lighted passages, following one of the guardians of the treasure caves, who opened the steel doors before him that he might pass, and locked them after him that none, unauthorized, might follow. Parton grinned reflectively but not happily at the sound of the bolts and grating keys. The attorney whom he had seen that morning had warned him, as I have said, of the uncertainties of the British law, and intimated that if he followed the course which he had planned to follow, he might be doing that which would be adjudged an act of common offence against it, and there was a suggestion in the clanking of the metal against metal in the locks which was not a pleasant one.

When he had reached a certain department of the great vaults he turned aside into a minor passage-way branching from an underground waiting-room where were provided tables at which customers of the vaults who had taken their treasures from the private drawers could examine them at leisure, and, later, could return them to the drawers again in part or not at all, as they desired. His guide pointed out to him a small drawer, duly numbered in the wall of steel. This he opened with a key from his own pocket, and his guide vanished. There was enough chance that MacFarren had begun operations early in the morning to make the young man listen somewhat apprehensively for whatever sound might come to break the stillness. But he had the place to himself except for the presence of the watchmen in their somewhat gaudy uniforms. One of them

paced up and down within a few feet of him, and, just as he had taken the belt which held his jewels from the drawer and had begun to unbutton the lower fastenings of his waistcoat so that he might buckle it around him, the man turned and looked at him. That the movement and the look were wholly matters of chance, he did not doubt, but at the same time he felt a thrill of shock, and, instead of going through the somewhat lengthy process of fastening the belt about his waist, Parton hastily opened the big black travelling bag and thrust it into it. After he had done this he had the feeling that there might seem to be something furtive in his look or action and he made a hearty effort to rid himself of it should any such exist. If it had been a matter of standing up to fight MacFarren with fair weapons, he would have been much more comfortable.

He went down the steps to a cab which had driven up, expectantly, as he neared the curb. As Parton swung the bag to the hansom's floor, and started to climb in himself, another cab dashed up and stopped behind his own. He caught a second's glimpse of the man who had already started up to leave the other, and recognized in that brief glance—MacFarren. He quickly shrunk back into his own vehicle, and gave the man his orders by shouting at him through the trap in the cab's roof. His words were born of hurry.

"Drive quickly to Liverpool Street Station," he said, sharply, and in another moment the cab had swung into the swirl of traffic and was hurrying through the tangle, as only a vehicle drawn by a sure-footed London cab horse, and driven by a quick-eyed London cabby, could have done.

Now Parton knew that the old man was on his

track, his mind worked busily. He had not the slightest intention of going to the Liverpool Street station; but that had been the first place that had popped into his mind, and he had travelled at least half the long distance to it before he decided on a course of action. Then he raised the trap and told the man to stop at the first clean-looking public-house he came to. In London public-houses are as numerous as daisies in May meadows, and the driver stopped at once. There Parton told him that he had changed his mind and would not go to Liverpool Street just then, paid him his fare and watched him drive away. In order to save appearances with the man, whom through some remote contingency might possibly be questioned later, he went into the public-house. He stayed there only for a few moments. It was fully half past ten, and while he sat there in the private bar a plan occurred to him which meant that he must hurry if he wished to carry it out. He realized that by that time MacFarren might be dangerously near to the point in his suspicions where, if he actually felt secure enough to try it. He might be, even then, conferring with the police as to the best means for preventing his stepson's departure from London.

It would, of course, be a trip to Holland, which MacFarren would expect. Parton knew, and had told MacFarren, that Holland was the only market where a man might reasonably expect to sell rough diamonds. He knew, and MacFarren soon would know, that every diamond going from South Africa was registered and described on the records so that an expert could quickly identify it up to the time when it had passed through the cutter's hands and

been changed in appearance. There is almost as much individuality in the quality of rough diamonds as there is in human faces. No two diamonds are really alike. He believed that MacFarren would quickly learn these things—this added to his belief that his first search would be in Amsterdam or Rotterdam. Therefore he decided not to go there; but to find some other refuge for the present where he could perfect his final plans at leisure. Also, he saw that he would be safer in the place he might select if, before he went, he arranged matters so that MacFarren would be confirmed in his belief that he had gone to Holland. His trail might have a chance to grow quite cold before it was investigated. He called another cab—with some difficulty, for the fog had by this time become quite dense—and gave the driver orders to take him to the Charing Cross railway station. He was distinctly nervous. On the way he stopped and bought a shaving outfit. He recalled the stories he had read about the thoughts of flying criminals and, although he was not a criminal and was flying only to protect his own, he felt that now he could sympathize with them and feel sorrier for them than he had ever felt before.

At the station his first care was to go to the booking office and secure a ticket by the Harwich-Flush-ing route. He chose that because it is a slow one, and he argued that, therefore, MacFarren would be delayed longer in getting returns from a supervision of it than he would be in getting news from any of the others. If he did not begin his search until the boat had had time to get upon the Channel, then there would be several hours for him to wait instead of the fifty-five minutes which is required by the

Calais-Dover passage. Parton took a "circular tour" ticket, too, at a reduced rate and available for use only within a certain limited length of time, because the purchaser of such a ticket must give his name in full to the ticket seller. As he called out "Henry Parton" to the man at the ticket seller's window, he half expected the policeman who stood close by to look up and make a clutch at him; but no such unpleasant episode occurred.

From the train-shed of the Charing Cross station the traveller may go direct to the street through one long, low, tunnel-like passage, or, by choosing another passage, reach an elevator which rises to the hotel which towers above the train-shed at the front. Parton chose the latter and, bag in hand, was soon before the register. After asking the clerk if he had a room and being answered in the affirmative, Parton registered, but the name which he signed upon the book was not his own. Once in the room he locked the door and, opening the satchel took from it the belt of diamonds which he quickly buckled about his waist beneath his shirts. Then he pulled out a sack suit and, with a sigh of regret, removed the frock suit which it had been so much pleasure to order with Norah as his mentor, and packed it tightly in the bag. And, with another sigh, his silk hat, the first that he had owned for five long years, was smashed flat also and the bag was locked.

The next stage in the programme which he had decided upon was not unaccompanied by risk of leaving a record in the memory of the bell boy who must help him in its execution; but he determined that he must run that risk, and rang the bell. When the boy came in answer to it, Parton gave him the

bag and the Paris ticket and told him that he must hurry down and book the satchel through to Amsterdam by the train which would leave in about half an hour, returning to him at once with the ticket which would be needed when the registration of the luggage was made. While the boy was gone Parton waited in his underwear, being anxious that no one should see him dressed as he would be when he should leave the hotel. But the boy was longer gone than he had expected. There was a desk in the room and he wrote a note to Norah in which he said good-bye again, and told her that he should let her hear from him as soon as possible. He gave no inkling of the plan which he had decided on, because he feared that through some chance the letter might fall into some other hands than hers. The temptation was strong within him to pour out his heart to her in this letter—and, it will be remembered, he had some small reason to believe that such a message would not be unpleasantly received—but he refrained. His future was now much too problematical to make it fair or reasonable for him to ask any woman to promise to share it with him.

By the time this letter had been finished, the boy had returned from the registration of the valise, and, after giving Parton the slip of thin white paper which is the incompetent European substitute for the good brass check of the American railway, gone away again, taking Parton's letter with him to be posted.

As soon as the boy was well away, Parton locked the door, and with reluctant razor sweeps completed the work which the barber had begun that day when Norah had ordered breakfast while he had had his

beard trimmed. He left not a vestige of hair upon his cheeks or chin or upperlip. He was amazed himself to see the great change this made in his appearance. He was also a little startled by a detail. His face had been heavily bronzed by his years in Africa, and the skin showed as white as a girl's where the beard had been. For a moment he wondered if he might not correct this with some stain which he could find at a chemist's shop; but soon abandoned this notion as complicated and theatrical.

Then quickly donning the blue serge jacket suit which he had taken from the bag—and which brought more memories of that day with Norah in the tailor's shop—he pulled a travelling cap from its pocket, put it on, and looked long and earnestly into the mirror to see how much the new Henry Parton differed from the old.

The result was satisfactory; but, as he gazed, a thought occurred to him which made him grin again. This young man who was preparing to run away from England with sixty thousand pounds worth of diamonds technically belonging to another man, was really beginning to get fun from the experience! He gently dabbed a little lather on the upper inside and lower outside corners of his eyebrows, and, presto! with a touch of the razor in four places, he gained an expression so unlike his own good-natured, high-class English look that he surmised that such placid dowagers and simple-minded country maidens as he might thereafter meet before the hair came in again would involuntarily dodge and wonder innocently as to details of the wickedness which was writ so plainly on his face. This new face made, and capped jauntily, he listened for a moment at the door. He heard no

footfall in the corridor without and had almost turned the handle to leave the room when he thought of the Paris ticket and the baggage receipt. Returning and lighting one burner of the double gas jet which flanked the mirror, he steadily held the papers in the flame until they crinkled to black cinders of fantastic shape. These he crushed between his fingers and threw into the empty grate. Then, with a blast of his breath to scatter them, he started toward the door again. As he hesitated, with his hand upon the knob, he could hear the conversation of some invisible men approaching it. He reflected that the best laid plans of fleeing criminals (he had organized a joke within his mind, a part of which was that for the time he must regard himself as a successful thief escaping with his booty) oft went astray, and that the men might be his step-father with some minion of the law; but, as they passed his door without a pause, he concluded that this guess had been mistaken, and went out himself, and carefully locked the door behind him.

The corridor stretched long and bare before him, and he was glad of that; but just before he reached the elevator, its door opened and from it stepped the very lad who had taken his bag down for him for registration. It was reasonable to suppose that if this boy did not look twice at him his appearance had been completely changed, for it is the practice of all servants in all British hostellries to remember the faces of those whom they have served ever so unimportantly, with a tenacity that is astonishing, in the hope of further tips. But the boy glanced at him carelessly and went upon his way. Parton was almost pleased to the point of humming tunes! But

he did not. He descended the stairs slowly, and eventually again found himself in the train-shed of the station.

After he had reached it he hesitated for a moment. He had a dim memory—left over from his boyhood—of a stairway which descended to another street, and thus wholly avoided the crush and crowd in the little square before the station, and his eyes were wandering along the side wall in search of the entrance to it, when their survey was arrested by the appearance of a familiar figure in the crowd not far away from him. His success in hiding his identity from the tip-hungry bell-boy had changed his mood into something very like bravado, for, instead of dodging MacFarren's wandering gaze, he courted it. He saw, too, that the barrister was accompanied by a man whose shoes were very thickly soled, and had a look of convict-made about them, and who he identified, therefore, as an official of police. Still, instead of hurrying away into the remoter recesses of the busy crowd which thronged the station, he lingered so that the two men passed within six feet of him. Indeed, MacFarren almost caught his eye. He found that a certain exhilaration sprang from this and the temptation was strong in him to do something which would attract their definite attention to him with the thought of further proving the effectiveness of his disguise but pulled himself up when he was hovering on the very verge of such an asininity. But he took a place in the line of people passing in front of the ticket-seller's window but two removes from MacFarren and his companion, and was able to catch most of the words exchanged between the detective and the agent.

The man told that he was from Scotland Yard, and Parton could imagine, although he could not see, the bow of interested courtesy and curiosity which the ticket-seller gave to him. "I am trying to trace the movements of a young man with a black, pointed beard, gray eyes, tanned face," the officer continued, referring to a paper in his hand, "probably dressed in a top hat, black frock, gray trousers and patent boots. Name, Henry Parton." The officer looked up again. "Have you seen such a man? We have reason to believe that he has planned to cross to Holland to-night."

The ticket-seller replied promptly.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I booked Henry Parton for a circular tour ticket straight through to Amsterdam, something over an hour ago. First class. Train will just have left, sir."

MacFarren and the detective at once fell out of the little procession, and Parton could see that both men looked relieved. Their clever reasoning had been confirmed! It would scarcely have been wise for him to fall out also, so he went forward into the places they had vacated, and booked himself for a point a few miles down the line; but as he did so, he could hear a part of their conversation as they paused to confer not more than six or seven feet from him.

"I told you so," he could hear MacFarren say. "He's off to Holland to dispose of them."

"He was an ass to book himself in his own name," the detective commented, "but they are all idiots on their first attempt. We'll get him easily enough, never fear. We may be too late to stop him at Harwich, but we can easily enough get him at Flush—"

The two men went away.

Parton found a porter, and, with no apparent reason for the generosity, gave him sixpence. The astonished man gazed after him wonderingly as he again mingled with the crowd. This time he made his way to the side of the train-shed, and passed along its outer wall until he came to the entrance to the side stairway.

As he descended this the fog came up to meet him, and he knew that even if his disguise should not be so effective as he had had good reason to believe it was, the friendly vapor would do much to cover up any tracks which he might make that day or night in the great city.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WEST INDIAN DOCKS

*With wind and tide to fight, sometimes a port that's in plain sight seems farther off than China.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.**

The street on which Parton found himself after his escape from Charing Cross station is a narrow thoroughfare, sloping sharply from the Strand to the Thames Embankment. There are public-houses in almost uninterrupted procession along one side of it, the other being occupied by the station and the bridge, and, on this day as on almost every other day of the year, it was, in spite of the fog, crowded by a throng of men and women not too reputable. So dense was the human mixture, and so thick was the fog enshrouding it, that Parton even found some difficulty in making his way through it. As he emerged from it into the narrow park which at this point skirts the Thames, he breathed a sigh of real relief which was not due wholly to the fact that he had not been interfered with by the police.

It was here, upon the very edge of the Thames, that he realized the real density of the vapor which had descended upon London. He had dimly remembered this unpleasant characteristic of his home city during his sojourn in other and more transparent atmospheres; but now for the first time since his return the remembrances were freshened. He had heard tales of strangers who had started from one

side of Trafalgar Square to go to their hotels almost upon its other border and had wandered helplessly all night, but these, in the old days, he had regarded as mere humorous imaginings. Now, however, he, a Londoner—true, one who had been away for long, but still one who had in his youth known London fairly—found himself in almost similar state. He hesitated, more as a matter of principle than because he thought that there would be real danger in it—to inquire his way, and so he floundered somewhat aimlessly. He had decided that it would be unwise to inquire his way of strangers or to ride in cabs on his way to the Liverpool Street station, from which he had made up his mind to leave London; but the narrow, tangled, unfamiliar streets, in combination with the all-prevailing fog, had him so completely confused soon after he had descended the slope at the other side of Blackfriar's Bridge Road, that he knew not whether he might not be doubling on his own tracks and going back again into what he considered the zone of definite danger. For hours he struggled in the fog. Finally he was astounded to meet a lamp-lighter at his work despite the uselessness of gas jets in the midst of such a light-smothering vapor. Also he felt the need of food. The need was more easily felt than satisfied, however. He was in a part of London which is occupied mostly by establishments whose activity ceases early, and restaurants which are open long after the mid-day luncheons are over are rare. Finally, so pressing became the longing in his stomach, that he decided to make inquiries of the first person whom he met. This chanced to be an officer, and Parton found a subtle amusement in getting him to help him. There

was a sarcasm about it that pleased him. Surely he must be a dull man who, in escaping from the law, asks and gets assistance from its paid agents and does not find entertainment in the thought of doing it. The policeman was, as all London officers must be if they wish to avoid unpleasant consequences, extremely obliging, and personally conducted Parton to a public house where solid as well as liquid refreshments were served to all who came, and Parton, grateful for the aid, asked him to drink with him in the private bar where his meal was served. The policeman was more communicative than the average bobby, and Parton found his talk about police duties interesting. He learned, among other things, that Scotland Yard does not satisfy itself as do the American police departments, with merely having the descriptions of persons whom the police are requested to search for read to the assembled officers just before they start on duty. It has them printed upon colored slips of paper, and each officer is handed one of these slips before he leaves the station house to begin his march about the city streets. This interested Parton, and he asked the officer to let him read the slip which he had received half an hour before. The officer passed it over without demur, and Parton glanced at it somewhat carelessly. It did not occur to him that matters could have gone far enough so that he would find his own name upon it; but, as a matter of fact, the first item on the list read:

SPECIAL ATTENTION!

PARTON HENRY: Arrest for the alleged unlawful removal from the vaults of the Royal Union Safety Deposit Company of uncut

diamonds to the amount of about sixty thousand pounds, sterling. Private reward of five hundred pounds sterling offered and deposited with the authorities. Especial attention of all men at railways and other travellers' centres ordered. Twenty-eight years old; height five feet ten; athletic build, generally good looking; heavily tanned complexion; black hair; newly-trimmed, black, Vandyke beard; dark gray eyes; familiar with South Africa and well educated. Last seen in black frock coat, gray trousers, silk top-hat, and patent leather boots, buttoned.

To read, cold-bloodedly and without tremors of the nerves, the printed offer of reward for one's own capture while seated, engaged in friendly converse with an officer of the law, is neither an ordinary nor an especially pleasant experience. It is possible that if the officer had not been so deeply engrossed in the pint of bitter which his companion offered, he might have noticed that his *vis-a-vis* was very ill at ease. But a second's thought showed Parton that the very fact that he sat with the policeman and that the latter did not suspect, made that place safer than most others would be. It pleased him to see that the description made such a strong point of that beard which now adorned his face no more. Also the mention of the clothes was comforting. He scarcely thought that, everything considered, this printed description would be likely to hasten his apprehension. But there was a detail which he liked not at all. That was the especial warning to officers stationed at railway stations and other places where travellers were likely to be seen. He had intended to wait until late in the evening and then take a train at Liverpool Street. This, now, would be obviously foolish.

For a few moments, as he sat there, pondering this matter, he wondered if he had not better wholly

change his plans and arrange to stay somewhere in London for a time in strict seclusion, but he quickly rejected this plan. He realized that the strain of doing so would be much greater than any which would come with movement. The notice had almost certainly been printed before his apparent trail had been found at Charing Cross, and the latter discovery had almost certainly deflected the attention of detectives away from London unto Holland. Of course Scotland Yard would probably keep its uniformed policeman still on watch in London; but the experience which he was having then with one of them made him think that he need not fear them very much.

When, finally, he separated from his policeman friend after they had reached the foggy street again, he was wondering if he had not better change his plans.

But, half an hour later, after he had passed London Bridge's entrance and was enmeshed in the labyrinth of narrow streets which lay beyond it, his feeling of security was sadly and suddenly shaken for a moment, for, out of the fog and darkness, there shot unexpectedly an arm, and the hand at its end caught him tightly by the sleeve. Furthermore, the cloth of the coat which clothed the arm was blue. He recoiled as if a definite assault had been offered by the stranger. But, in a second, he saw by the dim light of an adjoining street lamp that the trimming on the sleeve was of gold braid and that is not used by London police officers except on gala days by high officials; and then, with great relief, found that the man behind the arm was no policeman, but some steamship's petty officer. Moreover, the words tell-

ing him that he had been arrested, which he had fully expected would be spoken in a moment, did not come; but, instead, the stranger said in a voice in which complaint of the weather, condemnation of the crooked, narrow streets, and general criticism of existing circumstances could be plainly traced:

“Hi begs yer pardon; but w’re in ‘ell is London Bridge?”

The hearty earnestness of this inquiry was most comforting, and Parton told the stranger what he knew about the matter. As they stood talking in the fog, the stranger, unasked, gave the information that he was a sailor bold who was fresh from the West Indian docks, and searching London for a “time” (which Parton translated to mean a chance for roistering), of which the weather with its delaying fog promised to wholly rob him. He took this in bad part, he said, because his ship sailed on the morrow, and this night would be his last opportunity to get a glimpse of “life,” until a long voyage had ended and brought him back again. The mention of the West Indian docks put a notion into Parton’s head, and he laughingly told the sailor that if he would set him on his way to them he, in turn, would tell him all he knew about London Bridge—a bargain which was eagerly accepted and carried out on both sides. At the conclusion of his directions to the sailor, Parton was amazed to hear the bells of some nearby church ring out the hour of ten. He had been almost eleven hours in travelling what in a straight line would have been less than six miles of the fog-bound city!

After a moment’s talk along these lines, Parton found that his new acquaintance knew (or claimed to

know) practically every vessel then tied up in the great basin which makes London what few persons who have not studied the statistics of the shipping experts suspect—the greatest sea-port in the world despite the miles of sluggish Thames which intervene between it and the ocean. Parton reflected that in such vessels—these docks know few but freight carriers—might lie a much surer method of escape from London than lay by any railway, for he argued that the mere fact that he had not thought of such a plan at first would probably mean that MacFarren and his helpers would also pass it by. He questioned the man freely, because he felt that the fact that he was to sail upon the morrow made it safe to do so. The seaman spoke principally of sailing vessels, and this caught Parton's fancy, as he reasoned that there would lie another safety in the fact that the hue and cry which he now knew had been started would be likely to have died down to some extent by the time a really long voyage was ended, while it would be at its height for at least a week or two—long enough to give time to any fast steamer to reach her port of destination.

The sailor told him that there were not many sailing vessels still in the trans-ocean trade except those used for the carriage of oil and naphtha, and announced that he would abandon the sea as a profession before he would sail on one of these, because a man might not smoke on board of them. Still there were a few, he said, which had been able to stand up against the competition of the cheap "tramp" steamers, and whose cargoes were not especially objectionable. One of the best he knew of was in port at that moment, although he believed that she was to

sail upon the morrow. Her name was "Something-or-other-Scofield," he thought. He was not certain of its details, although he had that very day looked her over with an admiration not often merited by sailing ships in these degenerate days.

Parton made a mental note of this, and the two men parted with expressions of mutual esteem for each other and contempt for the weather—the stranger to follow Parton's directions in his search for London Bridge, and Parton himself to struggle through the ever-thickening fog toward the West Indian Docks.

His progress was slow, and was several times interrupted by delays occasioned by a total loss of bearings. The strain of real physical weariness, and the brain fag which had come to him from the fear of failure, began to tell upon him and he longed, earnestly, for a bed.

He walked on and on until he saw by his watch under a flickering gas jet that it was about the time when the sun would have begun to shine had there not been too much fog to make such a phenomenon possible in London that morning. He peered eagerly about him, investigating the neighborhood as well as he could in the bad light. He had begun to lose faith in the directions which the sailor had given to him as to the best way to reach the docks, and was pondering on whether he had not best give up the attempt for the time and try to find a place where he could get some sleep when he suddenly realized that his journey was at an end. He had reached the docks without recognizing them at first. There were the odors of salt and tar, of oakum and bilge water, as well as that strange, sweetish, almost sickening

smell which always seems to go with ship's cargoes, and there came the unmistakable breath of the sea from the big basin.

The vicinity of the West Indian docks is a queer neighborhood. Sailors' lodging houses, junk shops, ships' chandlery stores and such establishments abound. The Salvation Army is prominent, and there are a score or more of chapels which beg Jack Tar from all parts of the world to enter and have his soul saved in his own native tongue. Also, there are in plenty, places of quite a different character, where he may lose it with no speech whatever. The low stature of the buildings suggests that they fear the winds by which so many of the people with whom they do business make their livelihoods. Great piles of chain cable are piled in open spaces. That place of business is unusual which has not an anchor somewhere in its sign. Wooden images which make the Dickens enthusiast hark back to the little midshipman in "Dombey and Son" are frequent. Strangely named foods and drinks are advertised in the public house and restaurant windows. Unusual tongues are often heard upon the streets. I know of a quarrel which occurred near to the West Indian docks. Five men were involved besides the two officers who were called to take them into custody before the mêlée ended. One was American, one was French, one was Italian, one was German and the fifth man was a Malay. The policemen were Irish and Scotch.

Parton walked along the sidewalk, which is separated from the great gates leading to the docks by a space wide enough to be a plaza in any other city. The fog had thinned a bit with the coming of the day; but it was still necessary for him to go slowly

and to peer closely in order to see the signs. At last he found one which informed the wayfarer that within might be obtained good food and comfortable lodging at moderate prices, and he entered. He was ravenously hungry and satisfied his appetite. Then he was shown to a room which was clean. It had, so far as he could see, no other advantage; but, as he was searching neither for elegance nor great space, he undressed as quickly as he could, and, locking his door carefully and seeing to it that the precious belt was buckled tight about his body, piled into bed and almost instantly fell into a deep but not a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AN ADVERTISEMENT IN THE TIMES

**On a lonesome v'yage a floatin' chip 'll chirk you up th' way a brass band
wouldn't when you was to home.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.***

He slept heavily, but it was not later than nine when he awoke. His head was weary with the strain and worry of the day and night before, and his heart was heavy with that depression which comes to all at times when they are in the midst of hazardous enterprises. He reaped the penalty for past over-exertion, mental as well as physical, as he sat upon the edge of his bed in the sailors' lodging-house. For a time his thinking was anything but placid. He reflected that the police would have watched the trains and boats which had left London by the regular lines during the day and night before, and that, after they had found that he had not travelled by them, they would naturally turn their attention to the more unusual means of exit from London. He had always been a young man of especially steady nerves; but they were not steady that morning in the sailors' lodging-house.

It was only after a considerable effort that he was able to force himself to dress. He wondered if he would not find an officer with a warrant for his arrest waiting for him on the stairs outside his room. Later, when he entered the miserable eating-room, the sight of blue coat and brass buttons starting

fiercely toward him would not have surprised him in the least, although he told himself over and over again that there was scarcely a possibility that he could have been so definitely traced.

Even after he had settled himself at a table and ordered the hearty meal his stomach craved, he could not help occasional nervous glances at the door. He found what many another really brave man has found—that it is much more a trial of courage to sit still while some unseen danger may impend than it is to definitely oppose some danger that one knows about and can prepare to meet. He noticed that all those who were in the dingy place wore their hats while they ate, and this was a relief to him. He pulled his travelling cap well down over his eyes.

The problem which confronted him now was how best to investigate the ships then lying at the docks, and engage passage on them without occasioning unusual remark. This was not an easy matter to figure out. He reasoned that well-dressed young men without baggage and wishing to take passage on sailing vessels were doubtless rare.

Mercifully the time which elapsed between the giving of his order and the appearance of his food was long, and permitted him to collect his scattered wits. He called the waiter to him and sent him to get the morning papers. After his return he ate heartily and read the papers as he ate. First of all he scanned the sheets to see if they contained any mention of the circumstances which had led him to fly, and could find none. Then his attention was attracted by an article in *The Times*, which told how Rudyard Kipling had secured the information from which he built some of his Indian tales. Kipling was

just then coming into his own in England, and the newspapers, many of which had shown tendencies toward the ridicule of the young and unusual writer, had at last begun to praise him with effusion. This one now said that in order that he might describe with accuracy the experiences of one of his characters during a long trip through India in a bullock cart, he had made the journey himself, and had, in consequence, when he had written his story, been able to fill it with a wealth of accurate detail which had greatly enhanced its value as a literary production and which would have been, otherwise, quite impossible. Parton had been wondering what excuse he could possibly make for wishing to engage passage on a sailing-vessel. He had dimly remembered to have heard that there were those who suffered from various diseases who sought long voyages at sea as cures, and he had thought of this course; but a moment's reflection told him that it would be worse than absurd for him to try to pose as an invalid. He had about made up his mind to charge the idea wholly to a whim, when he saw the article about Kipling and mentally jumped at the suggestion which was contained therein. A search for literary material might offer the cause for any vagary. That was the solution of his awkward problem. From that moment he must be a writer, yearning to study the details of life upon the sea. He smiled to himself rather grimly, thinking that at last he might as well admit to the lunacy which it seemed to him now had governed the last few weeks of his life. The plan not only offered to him the necessary excuse, but would give him, he reflected, a pretext for any other seeming eccentricity which the situation might de-

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mand of him. No one, he reasoned, would be surprised by insanity in a novelist.

He had just reached this conclusion when, in laying down the paper, he folded it by chance so that the first column of the first page came uppermost. This is always in the London *Times* devoted to "personal" advertisements, and is known the world over among newspaper men and many others as the "agony column." It is probably the most widely read newspaper column in Europe. It performs all sorts of strange functions. It is a means by which the robbed communicate with the robber and offer to buy back stolen goods at high prices—and no questions asked. Lawyers in it advertise for missing heirs to fortunes. Clandestine flirtations are carried on by means of it. Families are sometimes reunited by small notices, cleverly worded and inserted in it, which none can understand except the ones to whom the appeals are made. Mothers send word through it to runaway children, and husbands and wives to deserting mates. It is the most extraordinary column which has ever been gathered together daily in the history of journalism, and in it Parton read the following advertisement addressed to him by name:

HENRY PARTON: Person who loses by your absence very angry and will make trouble for you if he can. Do not attempt to communicate with me at present. It might be dangerous to you. But by and by I shall expect you to, and, whether you win or whether you lose, I shall be glad to hear. For your sake I should be sorry to have you lose; but please don't think that that would affect my final decision of the question left unanswered. Of course you know that the property involved has nothing at all to do with that. By and by, when it will be safe for you to tell me where you are, I shall let you know through this column and shall be anxious to hear promptly.

N. M.

The unexpected message had a useful effect upon Parton. Of course "N. M." meant Norah. It had been clever of her to think of this way of reaching him, and it had been brave of her to use it. She must have known that it was almost certain that MacFarren would either find the notice for himself or have it pointed out to him, and she must have realized that such a circumstance would not make her living with him pleasanter, although the fact that he so thoroughly controlled her little property for the present would make it necessary. Life had looked dull enough when Parton had gone into the restaurant of the sailor's lodging-house. Now it brightened. He had by no means thought for a moment that she was mercenary or that her final decision as to whether she would marry him or not would be influenced by his financial prosperities; but he now admitted to himself that some of the pleasure of that one kiss which she had granted to him had been stolen by the fact that he had feared that if he lost his fortune he might lose her also. But there was something about the fact that she had thought of this roundabout way of sending him a message, and that she had worded it so comfortingly, that made him now believe that he had been wrong in this. It changed and clarified his view of her much more than could have done a message more effusive in its character.

The little message showed him other things as well. It emphasized the danger which he ran in remaining there in England where almost any turn of chance might put him at MacFarren's mercy through the paradox that in some cases proper laws can work injustice. It deepened his love for her—

that was quite inevitable—and it made him think for a moment of going to her and taking the consequences of a surrender or at least a compromise with MacFarren in penalty for the privilege of settling the sentimental matter for all time quickly; but this he rejected almost as soon as he had thought of it. He reflected that she was evidently as militant against the barrister as he was himself, and that surrender, for whatever cause, would not increase her respect for him. He saw that all there was to do was to fight the battle out as it had started: to carry out the plan of disappearance for the present until he could protect his interests in some way.

The message from the girl put heart into him; and on that morning, weary after the strain of the night of wandering in the fog, he had needed heart.

He called the mournful looking waiter who had been attending to his wants. He told him that he wished to see whoever was in charge.

"Is it Mr. Brownson you want, sir?" said the waiter, inquiringly. "He is in the kitchen."

"I presume so," said Parton. "Will you ask him to come in to see me?"

The threepence which he had invested in *The Times* had brought good returns. First it had showed him an excuse which he might use for the unusual proceeding of travelling on a sailing ship; second, it had brought this cheering word from Norah.

CHAPTER NINE

THE MASTER OF "TH' LYDDY"

Some men show that they are safe to know, just as some dock posts show that they are safe to clap a strainin' hawser 'round. They look strong.—The Logbook of the Lyddy.

The proprietor of the place soon appeared. He was a small, discontented looking man, who was downcast over the loss of a bill for three weeks board and lodging owed him by a sailor who had fled, leaving naught but brick-bats in his dunnage bag behind him. He tried to be as calm as he could while he talked to Parton; but it was easy to see that the loss had filled him with a grief difficult to be controlled.

"Now, you see," said Parton, with a calmness and lightheartedness in falsification which surprised himself, "I am a writer."

The man looked at him apprehensively and ran his eye over the partly emptied dishes on the table as if he were counting up the bill which this person would be unable to pay. Then he straightened up as if preparing for the shock and lisped:

"Yeth thir!"

"My name," said Parton, growing almost merry in his new-found peace of mind, "is Carter."

"Yeth thir!" said the enduring Jew.

Parton pulled out his coin case and laid a sovereign beside his plate. The expression on the Jew's face changed so quickly that his companion grinned

with joy. It was a relief to be amused. He put his hand over the coin, and the high smile on the Jew's face faded. But he made no protests. He had ceased to worry about the payment for the meal and nothing very bad could come now. The fact that his customer had proved to be a writer might make it most surprising that he did have money, but he had seen the color of his coin and now was certain. It was astonishing, but pleasant.

"Now," said Parton, wondering how upon earth a real writer of fiction would go about such a matter, and also thinking dimly that this particular scene might not be without its value if some one of them might witness it, "there are some things which I wish to have done for me. I wish to have them done without a whole lot of nonsense and talk, you know. I simply wish to have them done. Competition between newspapers is getting to be keen. I am afraid that if one of our rivals should find out what I am up to—why—why, they might go and be up to the same thing. Do you see?"

"Yeth thir," said the Jew.

At last Parton passed the sovereign over to him. His whole face lighted up with a bright smile. He was eager, now, to please the guest whom he had, a moment before, regarded with suspicion. The guest had money wherewith to pay for being pleased.

"Please take the cost of the breakfast out of that," said Parton. "Now I don't know whether you will be able to attend to what I wish to have done; but if you can do it I shall be very glad to pay you for your trouble, and pay you well."

The Jew's eyes had a deeply interested expression.

"Yeth thir," he said. "I can do it, thir, what ith it, thir?"

"You see," said Parton, "as I said, I am a writer. I want you to bring here to me or have brought here to me, the master of some sailing vessel which is to go to the States at once. I—I am to write a story which has in it a voyage on a sailing vessel, and of course I must take such a voyage myself in order to be able to write accurately of it. Don't you see? I might have—gone to some of the shipping offices; but you see—I was afraid that if I did, some of the other papers would—would hear about it and would—send men themselves, you know."

"Yeth thir," said the Jew.

Parton had wondered if the man would look at him askance after he had told him that he was a writer; but was surprised, now that the worry over the bill had left his face, to see that it bore a look of profound respect and even open admiration.

"I never could learn to thpell," said the Jew, with real regret in his voice.

"No?" said Parton, in surprised inquiry.

"No," said the Jew, turning the sovereign in his hand, and tossing it up and catching it as it came down with a click. "No. I could never learn to thpell. Thometimes I think that if only I could have learned to thpell—I—I—"

"Oh, I see," said Parton, realizing that he was gazing at the shell of a wrecked ambition.

"But I'm proud to meet a gentleman who can," said the Jew, "and thall be motht pleathed to do whatever I can to therve you."

"Well," said Parton, "you are very kind, I am sure. Then, perhaps, I may ask you to see to it that

I am not cheated in making my bargain with the—with the master of the ship."

This appeal to his honor was the last thing needed to make the Jew an enthusiast over Parton and his project. He showed tremendous interest in both—an interest so keen that had not Parton been entirely certain that the man must be ignorant of the reason for his flight, he might have been suspicious of him.

The Jew said that he knew a German skipper who would sail upon the morrow if he could get a crew.

"I don't speak German," said Parton quickly, fearing that if he sent for the German and then betrayed an ignorance of the language, the reason which he had given for his sailing would at once be recognized as false. Then he remembered what his chance friend of the evening before had said, and added: "I have heard about a ship which may have already sailed. If she has not gone, she might be just what I am looking for. I have almost forgotten her name, but it is something like the *Lydia Scofield*. Do you know anything of her?"

The Jew paused in thought. At last he raised his head, triumphant.

"I have it," he said. "I have it, thir. It'th the *Lydia Thkolfeld* that you're thinking of."

"Yes," said Parton. "That *is* the name, I think. I only heard it once. Do you know where she is?"

"Thee ith a barkentine," went on the Jew, "but perhapth thee ith gone. Thee wath laden yethterday. It wath purely a matter of getting a crew. Her captain ith very particular about the men he thipt. Thall I thee about him?"

"I wish you would," said Parton, gratefully.
"Where shall I wait for you? Here?" he asked.

"Oh, I thall thend a boy to thee," said the landlord. "If thee hath not thailed, I thall make the Captain think that I can help him to get thome good men. That will bring him to me at oneth. He might not come if I jutht talked pathenger to him. He wouldn't believe it. If he hath not thailed he will come—quickly—yeth."

He looked at the hand which Parton had closed over the small change which had been handed to him after his bill had been deducted from the sovereign.

"Of courth I thall have to pay the waiter thome-
thing for hith trouble; but I am thure that you will
not mind that."

Parton grinned. It was rather coming it on him to tell him that he would have to pay the waiter anything for going out of that eating room with its dim light and pronounced smells into the open sunshine and fresh air, but he said:

"Not at all."

The waiter was dispatched.

In about half an hour he returned with the master of the American berkentine, *Lydia Skolfeld*. He was a short, chunky, good-natured looking New Englander, with gray mustache and a close cropped beard. He went to the table where the Jew and Parton still sat.

"Well, Aaron," said the skipper, "you sent for me and I have come. That's what the charge in the gun that wasn't loaded said to the small boy when he pulled the trigger. Now what do you want with me? Got any men for me?"

He laughed good-naturedly as he looked Parton over.

"I don't suppose that this young man wants to ship before the mast on my old hooker," he added.

"No," said Parton, answering for the Jew. "I don't want to ship before the mast; but I want to ship behind it, if there is where the passengers ship."

The old man looked at him with some surprise. It had been many years since a stranger had asked him for the privilege of crossing with him as a passenger.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "You don't look consumptive, nor yet you don't look as if you'd been drinkin' yourself to death. Them's the only folks that wants to cross in sailin' ships, nowadays."

Then Parton told him his lie about his newspaper work. Practice had made him do it fairly well by this time; he had been practising on the Jew. It was evident that the Captain scarcely believed what he said; but it was also evident that if Parton really did want to write a story about a voyage in a sailing vessel, the Captain would be glad to have it made in the *Lydia Skolfeld*. It was quickly apparent that he was inordinately fond and proud of his ship, although he ostentatiously called her an "old hooker," and a "rag power liner." Before he finally accepted Parton's offer, he had devoted half an hour to a eulogy of her, had explained that he owned her himself, and had a general scorn of agents and such folk.

"There ain't no money for wind jammers in the British trade no more," he said, reflectively, "and there ain't no money for a craft o' th' *Lyddy*'s build in th' coastwise trade no more. Th' British trade goes to them coal-eatin' iron tramps. All you need's any old bundle o' rust, by John! You c'n do better

with it 'n you can with th' best built wooden clipper that ever sailed across a bar. They ain't got no speed in partic'lar, an' their enjines is always a-breakin' down, an' in order to make any time they've got to carry s' much coal that they ain't got no room left for cargo; but somehow or 'nother, if you want to get any cargoes, these days, you've got to have fire in your innards. Makes me tired, by Quincy, but I can't help it. An' 'long th' coast—though I didn't never have much use for a man that kep' to the coastwise trade: allus looked to me sort as if he's skeert about goin' out o' sight o' land where it's over his head—they ain't got no use, no more, for real ships. What they want is schooners. Why, they're buildin' 'em with eight, nine masts, nowadays. Don't take no hands to run a schooner. They have dunkey en-gines to make sail an' take it off; they have dunkey engines to steer th' blame hookers, an' they have dunkey en-gines to cook their duff, I expec'. I know they have dunkey sailors to make up their crews, by Adams! 'T makes me tired to think of 'em. An' they're hollerer than the promises of the onrighteous. They'll hold more'n the pit o' Hell, an' that'll be some crowded, unless it's right commogeous, I'm thinkin'. An' what with their en-gines an' their other tricks an' trappin's, it don't take no men at all to sail 'em, an' what men they *do* have don't have to be *real* men! Why, I'm told that this new eight sticker that they're buildin' can be sailed by one man and a boy, an' th' boy needn't be over strong, nor th' man past middlin', by John Quincy Adams! Takes 'leven men to keep th' *Lyddy* goin'. Be you married?"

"No," said Parton, and there flashed across his

mind a vision of Norah. There was small chance that he ever would be, he thought.

"How much are you willin' to pay?" asked the Captain.

"Whatever you think is right," answered Parton. And then added quickly at the thought that he still must be cautious, "That is, of course, if it is reasonable."

"It'll cost you more'n it would to go over in a steamer," said the Captain, "but I s'pose you got your own reasons for wantin' to go on th' *Lyddy*."

"How much?" asked Parton, trying hard not to speak fast.

"Twenty pound," said the Captain. "You c'n go on almost any of th' steamers for less 'n that."

"Twenty pounds seems like a fairly high price," said Parton, as if considering.

"Well," said the Captain, reflectively, "there's one good thing about it, by John, you don't *have* to pay it! Not 'less you want to, by Quincy. Nobody ain't got no rope on you, by Adams! You can suit y'rself, by John Quincy Adams!"

"Oh, I'm willing to pay it," said Parton somewhat hurriedly, "but I shouldn't want to pay much more. I couldn't afford it."

"Well," said the Captain, having passed the sharp annoyance that made him swear so wickedly, "there ain't nobody askin' you to pay *any* more, so far's I can see."

It was evident that he felt a little ashamed of and sorry for his outbreak.

"You see, it's like this," he went on. "Mebbe it don't seem reas'nable for me to charge more for passage in th' *Lyddy* than you'd have to pay in some

steamer'n other. But th' biggest part o' th' cost o' my passage of you, is what you eat, by John! All right. You see that, don't you? Yes. Course you do. Blind baby could see that. Well, one o' them Quincy steamers—one o' the slow ones—wouldn't have to feed you at th' outside, for more'n ten or twelve days. Now, I've got to feed you prob'lly thirty days anyway, an' I've had a passage take me four months. It's a specalation with me. I have to take chances. If God's good 'n th' wind's fair, an' you don't eat *too* much for your size, I may make somethin'—just a leetle somethin'—out o' you. If He ain't good, an' th' wind's foul, an' you turn out to be one o' them Englishmen with a stomick that's bottomless like the Lake o' Fire mentioned in Holy Writ, I'm goin' to lose, by Adams! S'pose you're one o' them perpetual eatin' machines, an' I have to feed you for, say, a hundred an' twenty days! Where's my bright an' glitterin' profit comin' in? It ain't a-comin' in, by John Quincy Adams!"

"All right, Captain," said Parton, puzzled by the queer Yankee as Englishmen always are by queer Yankees. "Shall we call it a bargain?"

"It's just edzac'ly as you like," said the Captain. "I'll be glad to have your comp'ny over. By the way—are you *good* comp'ny?"

Parton laughed.

"Well, I don't know," he replied. "I'll try not to be *bad* company."

"Know any good stories?"

"One or two."

"Well, just let me say in advance that you'll be a fool if you spring 'em all the first day out. Lots o'

folks makes that mistake. Save 'em, young man, save 'em for bad weather."

"Shall I pay you now, Captain?" asked Parton.

"Don't make no diff'rence to me," said the Captain. "Pay when you like—so long's I know that you've got money to pay."

Parton made a motion as if to show him that he had enough money; but the Captain raised his hand.

"Oh, you needn't flash your money on me," he said. "If I find you ain't got it, I'll just drop you over after we get out to sea."

But Parton had already pulled a long pocket-book from the inside of his waistcoat and quickly counted out four five-pound notes to the Captain. As he did so a card dropped from the pocket-book to the floor. The Captain took the notes, folded them up carefully, and put them away. Then he turned to the Jew.

"Aaron, I guess we'd better wet our whistles on this," he said solemnly. "I don't never drink much when I'm at sea—that is, I don't never drink no more'n I can git—so when I'm on land I gin'ly do."

As he made this remark he moved about so that the position of his feet changed and one of them covered the card which had slipped from Parton's pocket-book.

The Jew had evidently sold him liquor before, for he said:

"Rye whiskey for yours, eh, Captain?"

"Yep," said the Captain. "Can't stand Scotch. Tastes like the smoke from a bad managed bonfire had got into it."

After they had had their drink, the Captain said:

"Got any dunnage?"

"What's that?" asked Parton.

"Oh, clo'es an' things," answered the Captain. "There wouldn't be no use of wearin' out good ones, like them you got on, on an old hooker like the *Lyddy*. It's almost never 't we have a ball on board."

Parton had utterly forgotten the matter of luggage. It had not occurred to him that it would seem strange for him to start on a long voyage with no clothing other than that which he had upon his back. Everything else that he had taken from the house he had shipped to Paris in the big bag. It made him stammer for a moment.

"Oh!" said he. "Oh, of course! There will be a bag full of traps down here pretty soon for me."

He turned to the proprietor of the lodging-house.

"You will send it over to the ship, won't you?"

The proprietor, whose happiness had been made complete by Parton's purchase of all the cigars he had in stock, said he would.

Parton noticed, or thought that he noticed, that the Captain looked at him rather sharply for a moment. But there was no comment made, and after shaking hands with the Jew, they started for the American barkentine, *Lydia Skolfeld*.

CHAPTER TEN

ON BOARD THE "LYDDY"

It's jest when we're a-feelin' safest that a tidal wave 'll come aboard an' stop for tea.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

That Captain Obed Burgee did not really believe that Parton had a bag coming was shown by the fact that when they passed a slop shop as they walked from the sailors' lodging house toward the dock where the barkentine *Lydia Skolfeld* was in cargo, and waiting for the return of her master before setting sail for Boston Harbor, the Captain said:

"You can go in here an' buy some clo'es, if you want to."

Parton almost did it, but he suddenly thought that such a visit by a man so well dressed as he was would be likely to attract attention and might be the means of upsetting all the carefully laid plans which he had made and all the good luck which he had had. Besides that, he felt that it would be an admission to the shrewd Yankee captain that he had been lying about the expected valise, although he scarcely believed that he had fooled him as it was.

"No," he said, "my bag may be down, now any minute. I've some things in it that will be all right. The only thing I haven't that perhaps I ought to have is a heavy top-coat. The last time I was at sea I swore that I would never go again without one."

The Captain looked him over with shrewd, inquir-

ing eyes. He liked his face; but he had well defined suspicions of the young man's frankness. That was why he had quietly picked up and secreted for future reference the card which he had seen Parton drop in the restaurant. He did not for a moment believe that there was any bag to be expected. He said to himself:

"Th' cuss ain't got no dunnage! That's funny, by John!"

He said aloud, and very cheerfully:

"I've got an old overcoat that you can wear if we git any frost; but I ain't lookin' for it now, in June. If that's all that's troublin' of you, we'd better hustle right along an' git aboard. I'm short-handed in the fo'c'sle, an' my mate's drunk—or somethin'—in his bunk; but th' *Lyddy*'s got to sail next tide, jest th' same! Dock charges here is higher'n th' towers o' Heaven's gover'ment buildin's, an' we've got to sail."

Parton liked the man and liked his Yankee talk. He also liked the notion of quick sailing. He looked at him and grinned. There was a hint of philosophy, well salted, in the quizzing glance the Captain gave him back.

"I don't *like* to sail short-handed," he said, slowly, "but you are some relief to me. If we're wantin' extry work done now an' then, perhaps you'll try to help. I don't mean in real hard labor like th' splicin' of th' main brace——"

Parton laughed outright, and the fact that the young man knew the meaning of this historical bit of marine slang evidently raised him in the Captain's eyes, for, without a word but with a wink that was most unmistakably expressive, he motioned to a

public-house, where they went in and Parton then and there proved his seamanship by splicing that main brace.

When they reached the street again after this cordial episode, the old man had re-begun his grumbling.

"Ain't got enough men to keep her cloe's on in a Summer breeze," he muttered again, referring to his ship. "An' she a lady, too! I tell you, it ain't modest."

As they walked down the great stone dock, Parton asked the Captain which of the ships of the half dozen which lay along it was his vessel, and when the old man pointed her out with a slighting wave of the hand, a reference to her as an "old hooker," and a grin that tried to be apologetic but was proud instead, Parton saw that she was a very pretty barkentine, clean—and this is rarely true of sailing vessels in these degenerate days of steam—and with her "bright work" almost as glittering as it would have been if she had been a man-of-war.

"If I don't got a few more men," observed the Captain as he climbed on board and caught the winking of that polished brass, "I reckon my yeller metal 'll be some duller 'fore I git into Boston Harbor!"

"It must take a good deal of hard work to keep her as ship-shape as she is now," said Parton, with an admiring glance around, "and I know that ships are generally dirtiest when they are in harbor."

"That's so," said the Captain, pleased again by the praise of his ship. "They allus are. An' it *does* take a lot o' work. But if I can't sail a *clean* ship, I won't sail *no* ship, by John! Some o' these here

vessels in these here docks is so dirty that their compass needles can't git free space to turn in. Yes, sir, by Quincy! Why, an Eyetalian brig come in here t'other day, and after they'd tied up someone noticed that th' Cap'n wasn't nowheres round. Fin'ly they found him. He'd slipped an' fell down into the grease an' dirt there on that deck, an' it had covered him all up. Yes, sir, by Adams! He'd slipped down an' stuck fast to his own dirty deck! An' his mouth an' nose was so full of taste an' smell that he couldn't holler neither!"

The Captain went below a minute later, telling Parton that he would return at once to the deck. When he came back out of the narrow companion-way that offered entrance to the quarters aft, it was plain to see that he was not pleased.

"Mate's still out o' business," he said, grumbly. "It's jest grog, though. Thought it was, at first, but wa'n't quite sure. But now he's talkin' in his sleep an' tryin' to sing comic songs I'm certain. We'll git her down th' Channel some way. I ain't a-goin' to pay dock charges while he sobers up."

Then he had a conference with the second officer. Parton did not hear it; but he judged from the Captain's look of qualified approval that the officer had been able to get together as many men as were necessary to sail the ship, although he did not seem to be very well satisfied with their general character.

"Well," he said, turning away from the officer and starting toward Parton, "if we've got to take that kind of cattle, I suppose we've got to; but it's most amazin' where th' real *sailors* has all gone to. I'd rather have a Yankee, deaf an' dumb an' with club feet than most of these here foreigners with

college educations an' records in gymnasiums, by John Quincy Adams! How we goin' to give 'em orders? They can't understand us an' we can't understand them, an' neither one of us can't understand th' other one! Here I be, a-startin' on a v'yage without first mate—he's lyin' drunk—with a second that jest plain amounts to nothin'—an' with a crew with talk to make a crazy quilt seem monotonous to look at! *I like to sail a ship.* I ain't never taken out no papers as chief navigator of no Tower o' Babel! I tell you what it is—I tell you what it is—th' sea's a-goin' to *pot*. That's what it is!"

A steam tug was lying with hawsers already almost taut, to haul the *Lydia Skolfeld* out of her berth. The Captain apologized to Parton, with a strange understanding twinkle in his eye for not waiting longer for that bag. He explained that if he did not get under weigh at once he would not have the tide to help him down the river.

"Want your passage money back?" he inquired, grinning.

"No. Never mind," said Parton, with an involuntary sigh of real relief as he saw the water space between the ship and the dock widen. "I shall get along all right. He'll probably keep my bag until I come back. I shall be all right."

"Well," said the Captain, still with that appreciative grin, "th' tide helps me along a full five knots an hour. If you git *too* naked, I reckon we can fix you up some here on board. Th' mate don't seem likely to need *no* clo'es on this v'yage. I reckon he won't be sober 'fore we git off Cape Cod lights. I've got some extry truck, too. With what you've got an' what we'll let you take, you'll be all right. An'

even if th' skin *does* show through in places after a spell, *we* won't mind that, an' there won't be no ladies on th' ship to worry. I re'lly couldn't hold my ship jest so's you could git a grip-sack with some white pants in it—could I?"

He winked at Parton, and beckoned to him to follow him into the cabin.

"This'll be my last drink, I reckon, till we're in dock on t'other side th' boundin' main," he said, "an' I guess I'll make it a good sized one. Have some? I've got to hurry back on deck again."

Parton nodded, and the Captain set the glasses and two decanters out on the cabin table. The little room was as neat and trim as could be found in any vessel that sailed from the West Indian Docks. It had a good sized table in it, and, strangely enough, there were novels as well as reports and books on navigation lying about and in the bookcase against the wall. There was also a mass of newspapers. A file of the New York *Herald* was piled against the wall at one end of the cabin table, which was evidently only about half in use at meal time, the other end being reserved for writing and other general purposes. The Captain noticed that Parton looked with pleasure at the reading matter.

"Yes," said he, "I have to have plenty of printed stuff aboard. I didn't use to git so lonesome when I was to sea. Now I do, an' I like to read love stories. Th' newspapers—course I have to have th' newspapers! Everybody has to have th' newspapers. Guess you're glad of it, eh? Bein' a newspaper man, you know!"

"Oh, yes. Of course," said Parton, smiling sickly. And the Captain grinned. It was a wise old

grin, and it made Parton wonder, but he kept quiet.

"I shall be right glad to have you aboard," the Captain said, some time later.

He only visited the cabin at intervals during the ship's passage down the Channel; but Parton, somehow, although he knew that the idea was idiotic, felt safer there in the seclusion under decks than he did above. It seemed to him when he was in the open air that every person on all of the boats which swarmed in the waterway must be looking for him and trying to prevent his escape from England. Other courageous men have had similar experiences. A reaction is likely to come to anyone after a considerable strain has been suddenly lessened, and one came to Parton although he now felt that there was really no reason why he should feel any apprehension that anything could possibly interrupt his journey.

"I didn't use to git so lonesome when I was to sea," the old man went on. "I allus uset to have my wife with me. She's done a right smart o' travellin', first an' last. We ain't got no childern, an' that's be'n th' greatest sorrer of our lives. I got a nephew who sometimes uset to sail with me, but he's too busy now. He lives on Staten Island, down in New York Harbor. I couldn't never bear to live ashore right along. Th' man who lives ashore allus has th' same front yard. I don't with my ship! An' my nieces—they're both married. One's a Chinee woman."

Parton looked at him and gasped.

"*What?*" he said.

"*Yep,*" said the Captain, carelessly. "Come up

on deck, an' I'll tell you about it. It's quite interestin'."

They went on deck. No day could have been more beautiful. Parton's spirit rose pleasantly. At last, forgetting how often Fate had disappointed him of late and making no account of unhappy contingencies that might arise, he felt that he could snap his fingers at MacFarren; the sorrow of his mother's death was quite forgotten for the moment, and he looked forward, down the Channel, convinced that at the voyage end there lay a future big with happiness; for after the advertisement in the *Times*, he felt that he had good reason to believe, now, that Norah would share it with him. For the time his identity was wholly sunk, and he happily believed that there could be no possible revealment of it before the ship touched land again, and by that time he thought that he should have figured out a plan of meeting whatever might confront. He had not the least idea that the snoring, drunken man below could trouble him. He had not the least idea that down the Channel anyone could be waiting for the very purpose of invading this new paradise of sweet security which he had found. Altogether, as he leaned upon the *Lydia Skolfeld's* rail and listened to her Captain's yarns, he was contented.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE UNEXPECTED ALWAYS HAPPENS

*It's allus when we're feelin' nice an' safest, that a tidal wave 'll come along an' stop on board for tea.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.**

"Yes," said the Captain, after they had comfortably arranged themselves. "My niece—she's a Chinee squaw all right. You see, I had to lay up my ship in Shanghi for repairs, one v'yage. My wife's sister an' her husband was along that trip, an' their little gal was born there. If *that* don't make her pidgin, what would? I got another niece that's Maylay, an' my nephew, when he gits old enough to vote, 'll have to git naturalized or vote for the Czar o' Rooshy, I'm a-thinkin'. I ain't got a single young relation that was born under th' Stars an' Stripes—not one, by Adams. It makes my niece mortal mad for me to tell her that she's a Chinee squaw, but she is, under the law."

Parton laughed.

"An', as I was a-sayin'," the Captain went on, "I shall be right glad to have you aboard th' *Lyddy* this v'yage. My folks allus uset to sail with me, but now I have to sail alone.

"I've been mate or master on ships sailin' under twelve different flags in my lifetime—but they's only one re'ly good flag, I reckon—that's th' Stars an' Stripes. Now don't git mad. 'F you didn't think th' Union Jack was better, I wouldn't have no use

for you. But of late years I've be'n so lonesome when I was to sea that I didn't want to sail under *no* flag. My wife, Lyddy, she can't stand th' sea no more, and there don't seem to be *none* o' my relations that wants to sail with me. An' sometimes I feel jest as if I'd like to give it up, by John Quincy Adams!"

Parton smiled a little at the Captain's unusual and oft reiterated oath. The old man caught sight of the grin.

"Mebbe you've noticed a peculiarity about my swearin'," he said. "I don't take th' name of th' Lord my God in vain, very much. I jest use th' name of th' ablest man He ever made, instead. I've sometimes thought that it unfitted me, some, for bein' a sailor—you can't allus control men without usin' *real* cuss words at 'em when th' el'ments is re'ly up an' *doin'*. But ol' John Quincy Adams 'll do in fair weather, all right, an' I know it would hurt my wife's feelin's if she thought I was off cussin' an' swearin' *too* much, all alone on th' sea. She don't approve of real swearin' very much, Lyddy don't. Yes, th' ship's named after her. She was Lyddy Skolfeld 'fore we was married. But they *is* times when th' master's *got* to swear. She knows it too. They's times when it's th' only way you c'n git th' men to work for you. One time we was jest a-crossin' th' Line an' th' men was actin' frightful. I'd John Quincy Adamsed 'em till every time I tried it my tongue tied up, out o' pure disgust an' shame. They was *pesky* mean that trip. By John, I thought I'd got a reg'lar old fashion mut'ny on my hands, an' I guess she thought so, too. Anyway, she comes up to me, she does, and she says:

"‘Obed,’ says she, ‘can’t you do nothin’ with them men?’ she says.

“An’ I answers that things was a-lookin’ bad.

“‘Can’t you cuss ‘em?’ says she.

“I jest looked at ‘er in dumb amazement.

“‘That’s all right,’ says she. ‘I’m sorry to have to say it to you; but I guess they *is* times when the master of a ship has *got* to swear. ‘N I guess,’ says she, ‘that this is one o’ them times. Now you *cuss* them men, Obed. Cuss ‘em till you an’ them both is jest black in th’ face. Cuss ‘em, Obed, as you never cussed *no* men before. Oh, Obed, cuss ‘em hard!’

“I was jest lookin’ at her dazed like to hear her say it.

“‘Yes,’ said she, ‘an’ don’t waste no time a-lookin’ at me ‘fore you begin. You go for’ard an’ cuss ‘em, an’ I’ll go below an’ pray for your soul,’ she says. ‘You *cuss* hard, an’ I’ll *pray* hard,’ she says. An’ then she added, ‘An’ we’ll trust in th’ Lord to bring us out all right, both ways.’

“An’ we carried out her plan, an’ we *did* come out all right.”

Parton had almost forgotten the worry of his flight.

“I hoped mebbe,” said the Captain, “that I’d git a grin out o’ you. You’ve been a-lookin’ as if you’d lost your penny an’ couldn’t buy no stick o’ candy when you got down to th’ store. A face as sorrowful as yours would be enough to bring bad weather. *You c’n* have another drink if you want to—I can’t drink no more till we git into harbor ag’in—not unless I re’lly want it.”

When he went below again, Parton sat at the

table with his chin between his hands, and the Captain looked at him with a quizzical grin. Parton's thoughts were full of the meaning of the black crepe on the door near Russell Square, the fact that he had been obliged to flee from his own country, and, through all and above all, he thought of the pleasant Irish girl whom he had left behind, and who, despite the advertisement in the *Times*, he might never see again.

"If you *don't* brace up," said the Captain, "we *will* have a storm. Say! I ain't never told you about th' other things that happened that time when we was a-layin' to in Shanghi and my Chinee squaw niece was born, have I?"

Although the Captain had only met Parton that morning, he pretended to be grievously afraid that he had told him all his tales before.

"No?" he went on. "Well, I'm goin' to. It's a real sad story. Guess it'll jest about fit your present feelin's."

There was some whiskey and water left in the glass out of which he had drunk before, and he gravely filled it to the brim again with water.

"I said I wouldn't drink no more whiskey till we got to port and I won't," he said, "but I c'n fill this up and get what little there is left of it without lyin', can't I?"

He drank the wofully weak mixture, and looked up comically.

"I ain't a good enough man to smack my *lips* over that," he said. "*That* 'd take a saint."

Then he continued:

"Well, as I was a-sayin', I had to lay up my ship to Shanghi, where my niece that's a Chinee squaw

was born, for repairs one v'yage. They c'n do good repair work over there. Hain't never told you about my Chinee suit o' clo'es, have I? Course I hain't. Hain't knowed you long enough. Never tell *that* story till *late* on the first day I've knowed a man. Guess it's about due now. It was this way. In some way I got down to one suit o' clo'es that v'yage. Can't remember how it happened; but it happened all right. An' then, one mornin' I was ashore along side th' *Lyddy*—I'd just finished my tradin' trip on th' junk an' th' *Lyddy* was about ready to sail ag'in, 'n a Chinee dog come along. Chinee dogs 'll gen'ly run if you spit at 'em; but this one wasn't that breed. I *did* spit at 'im, an' as I was a-chewin' tobacco at th' time, an' as I aimed right good, an' hit 'im in the eye, I guess it hurt some. Ever git any tobacco juice in your eye? No? Well, it ain't half so agreeable as kissin' your girl or goin' huckleberryin'. Well, that dog made for me. By John, I made for th' ship. I got there first, by Quincy; but the back part o' my pants was jest too late. That didn't get there no sooner'n th' dog's teeth did. Got there at th' same time, as a matter of fact. But I went on, by Adams, takin' with me th' balance o' the garment. Well, as it was th' only suit I had, I was in somethin' of a hole—an' th' hole—that was in th' pants. 'N' I had to call at th' Counsulate that afternoon, for I wanted to sail by th' flood, an' I had to git my papers cleared.

"Well, along come an Englishman. I ast 'im if there was any place in th' town—he lived there—where I could buy some pants, an' he laughed, an' he said that there wasn't any ready *made* clothin' emporiums that he could think of; but he said that if

I'd give a Chinee tailor a pair o' pants like them I wanted made, an' git th' cloth for a new pair an' give it to 'im, an' everything, he'd turn me out a pair all right enough. He said they was great at imitatatin' anythin'. He said they'd copy my pants exact, an' do it quick. He said I wouldn't have no trouble in gettin' it done in time to go an' see th' counsel. He said he'd send a tailor down to th' ship right away, an' all I'd have to do was to give him th' pants I wanted imitated, an' th' cloth an' things, an' it'd all be all right. *He* could talk Chinee, that Englishman could, an' he said he'd fix it so that I wouldn't have to do nothin' but give th' Chinee th' pants.

" Well, as I said, my wife was with me on that trip, an' so was her sister. Guess you must a-known that, 'cause I told you that I had a niece born there in Shang-hi, an' I couldn't very well have a niece born there unless her mother was along, could I? Lyddy, she hunted up some cloth. It was fine cloth. She'd picked it up at some port or 'nother where we'd touched, intendin' to have me a pair o' pants made out of it when we got home; but I told her that I prob'lly wouldn't never need pants no more than I did that minute, an' she handed over th' cloth.

" By th' time th' Chinee tailor come along we was all ready for 'im. He brought a note from th' Englishman, sayin' to give him th' cloth an' the pair o' pants I wanted to have imitated, an' that would be all that was necessary. He'd told him to make another pair just like 'em. Th' Englishman could *talk* Chinee, you know.

" Well, I give th' Chinee th' pants an' th' new cloth, an' he turned 'em both over an' jabbered away to beat th' Dutch. He held out th' tore place, an'

talked about that for some time, soundin' more like a sewin' machine than anythin' else I c'n think of. All I could do, of course, was to nod my head an' grin an' say 'Good John! Good John!' like as if he was a pleasin' puppy. At last the Chinee took th' tore pants an' th' new cloth with 'im, an' went away, motionin' by holdin' up three fingers that he'd be back at three o'clock. That's what I wanted, for I had to go to see the counsel at four.

"Well, prompt at six bells, back comes the Chinee with th' two pairs o' pants an' lookin' very happy. Some folks thinks that Chinees can't show any feelin' in their faces. Well, that Chinee could, an' did. He showed pride. He was as tickled over his job as a schoolboy is over th' first willow whistle that he's made that'll toot. He had th' old pants over one arm, an' th' new pants over t'other arm. I looked at 'em kind o' casual, an' the new ones certainly *was* a fine imitation. He'd made 'em jus' like th' old ones to a stitch. I never see nothin' like it.

"By this time it was gettin' long about time for me to start an' I hustled below into th' cabin an' put on my new pants. 'T was kind o' dark down there, an' as I goes below, my wife she sings out, askin' if my new pants was all right. I says they was. She says she was glad they was, an' to come an' let her see me after they was on me. I says all right I would.

"I couldn't see very well—we was tied right plum up ag'inst a dock—an' I dressed in th' dark, takin' off th' overalls I'd been a-wearin' an' puttin' on th' new pants. Then I went on deck and aft to where my wife was. I could tell by the feel that the pants was all right, an' I told my wife that them Chinee

tailors was wonderful fellers, an' that I was sorry I hadn't had this same feller make me a hull suit. I was just a kind of turnin' round, so's she could see th' full beauty of his handiwork, when she let out a screech that near scairt me to death. An' her sister bust out howlin' too, an' turned redder'n th' ground-work o' th' British flag.

"'What is it?' says I, thinkin' that mebbe somethin' had happened to 'em, or gone wrong with th' baby.

"'How did that Englishman tell him to make them pants?' my wife said, lookin' very strange at me. Her sister had jest pulled a shawl over her head and was a-shakin' as if she was a-havin' of convulsions.

"'Why, my dear,' says I, 'don't take on so,' says I. 'Better let me take you down below,' says I.

"'No,' says she, 'you let me alone,' says she. 'But *how* did that Englishman tell him to make them pants?' says she.

"'Why,' says I, soothin' like, 'he told him to make 'em jest like th' other pants,' says I.

"'Well,' she yells, 'he's done it! Oh! *He's done it,*' she gasps.

"Well, I tried to git her to let me take her below; but she jest went from one screech to another. Bimeby she got ca'm enough to tell me what was th' matter. Th' Chinee *had* made 'em jest like th' others. He'd imitated 'em exact. He'd even imitated th' hole th' dog tore out of 'em!"

A few minutes later, while Parton was wiping his eyes, the Captain said:

"Well, I guess I won't have to throw you overboard. You don't seem solemn enough for a Jonah, no more."

After this Parton remained on deck. The trip down the Channel was very delightful to him. For the first time since he had left the Russell Square house he felt secure. Nothing, he argued, could now interrupt his safety from the officers of the law until the *Lydia Skolfeld* touched port on the other side of the ocean. He would have weeks of mental ease in which to provide for the new campaign which would begin as soon as he stepped ashore in the United States. Already he had begun to formulate a plan of action to put into execution when that time came. He felt as near to content as he could while there rested on him the fresh shadow of his mother's death, and the lesser shadow of the remembrance that he was technically a criminal fleeing from justice, and that he was running away not only from almost certain arrest and imprisonment, but also from the vicinity of the girl he loved.

That his voyage would be as pleasant as a trip in a yacht he had no doubt. The season and the weather were ideal. The Captain was a good companion, and one of those in whom the intelligent man instinctively feels confidence. Certainly he had made the beginning of the trip entertaining. When Parton saw him approaching again, he looked up at him with a smile and a prophecy that the voyage would be a comfortable one.

"Yes," said the Captain. "She's beginnin' all right. Hope it'll keep up like this—an' it ought to at this time o' year. I'm goin' ashore down here to Cowes. Lyddy an' me's got a little scheme which, somehow, makes me feel better after I git out to sea. Course she writes to me right along when she can reach me with mails; an' she allus makes it a point

to have a long letter waitin' for me at th' port where I can touch *last* in leavin' anywhere for home, no matter where my v'yage is a-beginnin' from. When it's beginnin' from England, the letter's waitin' for me at Cowes. When it's a-beginnin' som'ers else, it's *waitin'* for me some'rs else. See? 'T kind of starts me off on a v'yage with a good taste in my mouth, so to speak. Sometimes I can't git my letters, 'cause mebbe I can't git nigh enough to th' place where we've agreed that they should be a-waitin' for me to git 'em. But I know that they're there, anyhow, an' that's a comfort. I'm a-goin' ashore here to Cowes. Don't you want to go with me? Shan't be gone more'n an hour."

Parton of course declined; but the episode did not worry him at all. Instead it set him smiling. He had begun to like the quaint old seaman very heartily, and this little by-play caused by his love for the wife at home was not of a nature to decrease liking on the part of a young man who was himself very thoroughly in love, and, therefore, sympathized with everything that breathed of it in others. It did not occur to him that the arms of the London police are exceeding long, and that they may reach out upon the water as well as grasp upon the land. It did not occur to him that, also, there might be upon that very ship a man whose knowledge of him might be very dangerous, and who had every reason to use it in keen enmity.

Just as the Captain had lifted his leg to climb over the rail and descend to the small boat which was bobbing at the ship's side, there came a low growling from the cabin. The Captain paused, and called the second mate.

"Perkins," he said, drily, "guess ye'd better see that everything's made fast, 'cause Mr. Black's a-wakin' up, an' he sounds to me like thunder. Mebbe there'll be a little storm when he comes up on deck; but I'll look after him when I git back. Don't let him worry no one none. He'll be all right to-morrow—when the bad taste's lettin' up a little."

After the Captain had gone ashore, Parton sat on deck and gave himself over to pleasant dreams of Norah. He had no feelings of doubt now as to the entire success of the plan of escape which had so far progressed so pleasantly, and his charming reveries were interrupted only once, when he heard through the open dead-lights near him the mate moving about the cabin, and, later, heard him shout from the companionway for someone to come aft. Parton was so situated, however, that he did not see the man. The second officer went below to him, where he remained for a few moments, and, after he had returned to the deck, went near to Parton with a smile and sat down by him. He was a pleasant-faced Swede, with that look of innocent surprise upon his face which so many of his countrymen wear throughout their lives, and he seemed to feel a little diffident about speaking to the passenger. Parton soon put him at his ease, however, and for a time they sat there in gossipy talk about the prospects of the weather for the voyage and other nautical matters. Then there came another growl from below.

"Yah!" said the Swede. "I must go down to him again. He iss not yust so yolly as he might be. It is the head of him that yumps. I will go to quiet him. It is better that he should stay yust where he iss than that he should come on the deck before the Captain he comes back."

Then he disappeared.

Parton tried to read, but again his thoughts turned to Norah, and for another half an hour he sat there dreaming of the future. He had placed a chair on the port side of the deck where he could gaze off across the Channel to where he knew France lay, and was almost startled when he heard a dull thump on the deck behind him, and, turning, saw a great bundle of newspapers lying there. As he gazed another came up in a sharp curve over the vessel's side and fell near to the first, and he realized that the Captain's boat must have returned so quietly that he had not heard the rattling of the rowlocks nor the voices of the men. He was about to start up to go to the vessel's side when the Captain's head appeared above the gunwale and, as he looked at it, threw at Parton a most portentous wink. There was no jollity in the closing of that eye nor in its opening, and Parton instinctively realized it. The wink meant something, though, and Parton involuntarily hesitated in his movements, as if waiting for an explanation. It came in pantomime, and Parton, for some reason which he could have hardly explained if he had been asked to, obeyed the motioned hints as silently as they had been given and sunk down into the chair again, filled, unexplainably, with dread.

The explanation came, in part, an instant later. As soon as the Captain had swung his somewhat bulky body wholly upon the deck, he leaned over the rail and said, in a voice which Parton dimly realized was unnecessarily loud—as if it had been raised for his benefit:

"Here! Take my hand, Inspector. You police fellers ain't much on climbin' ladders, I reckon."

If a bomb had exploded at Parton's very feet he could not have been more astonished than he was. He understood, now, what the winks had meant, he thought at first, and then he quickly reasoned that he must be wrong, for a warning from the Captain that a policeman was coming to the ship would mean that the Captain was in the secret of his flight, and of course, to think that would be absurd.

His first instinct was to stand and fight; but that, he quickly and sensibly reflected, would be absurd. If a policeman had really come aboard to get him, there would be nothing for it but submission, for the officer could very properly call on the entire strength of the ship's crew for assistance. Again the Captain turned, just as the first glimpses of a hat—bobbing as its owner climbed—appeared above the rail. Again the Captain winked. There was some delay in the complete appearance of the visitor. The ship was swinging lightly, and this motion was evidently hampering to the climbing of the landsman. While he paused on the ladder, with nothing more than the top of his hat appearing above the *Lydia*'s rail, the Captain stole a moment to step hurriedly to Parton's side and whisper:

"Now, don't you worry—not a mite. Guess we'll be full enough for *him!*!"

CHAPTER TWELVE

A VISITOR FROM THE SHORE

In a storm it ain't so much that I'm afraid that I'll be wrecked and drowned; as it is that I am kind of worried for fear I'll lose my ship and won't be able to die at home, in bed, with Lyddy settin' nigh to me a-holdin' hands an' smilin' nice an' comfortable.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy*.

After his hurried side remark to Parton, the Captain turned quickly back again to the ship's rail, and reached there in good time to lend a hand to the stranger as he clambered over. Parton sat, white and still, with his eyes intent upon the newcomer. There were many puzzling things to figure out about the Captain's apparent knowledge that he had reason to be afraid of the police; but he had no time for their consideration now. His mind took a fatalistic twist. What was to be, must be. He tried to pull himself together as well as he could to meet this new shock, but it was fully a moment before he felt at all satisfied that the color had come back to his cheeks and before his breath became regular enough again to be comfortable.

Fortunately he had ample time in which to regain his composure. For full five minutes the Captain and the Police Inspector stood talking on the deck. And now Parton had more than intuition to make him believe that the Inspector had come out to search for him. Unpleasant scraps of conversation drifted over to the young man. The words "rob-

bery," "diamonds," "mother's death," "MacFarren," and others of as great significance were plainly audible. But, in the midst of them, the Captain cast a look in his direction which he felt sure was meant to be reassuring.

Finally the two men disappeared into the companionway and went down into the cabin. But a moment later the Captain stuck his head out of the half-door, which was left open, and cried to him:

"Won't you come down, Mr.—Mr. Carter? We're havin' some pretty good liquor down here!"

Again he winked at Parton, solemnly, and made a slight beckoning motion with his finger as if to assure him that everything was all right. For a moment Parton hesitated. He did not know but that this invitation might be a trick to get him below, so that the arrest could be made without trouble, and for a brief second he considered the matter of running to the side of the ship, jumping over, and taking his chance of getting away by swimming to the shore. An instant's reflection, however, showed him how absurdly futile such an attempt as that must inevitably be. He was greatly puzzled and much worried.

In the meantime the Captain waited at the companionway entrance. He winked again.

"Won't you come below?" he repeated.

"Guess not, Captain," Parton said.

The Captain climbed up the two or three steps necessary to bring him wholly to the level of the deck and approached Parton friendly. Indeed, there was something almost fatherly in the red old face with its half moon of bristling gray whiskers framing in its chin, and the clear, blue eyes twinkling

from underneath shaggy eyebrows of pure white. He came quite close to Parton and spoke in a gentle, soothing voice that calmed the young man's agitation somewhat.

"Now I'll tell you," said the Captain, softly, and with a backward glance at the door of the companionway as if he did not care to be overheard. "Perhaps you *had* better take a turn or two on deck before you come below, but after you've done that, you come. It's a John sight the best thing there is to do, even if it is some hard. But now you ain't feelin' very well, I guess, and I don't blame ye, not a mite. But don't you worry. It'll all come 'round all right. Jest now you go for'ard an' tell the Swede —th' second mate, you know—to have all hands mustered on th' fo'c'sle deck there for our friend that's down below. It's his business to see everyone that's here on board of us."

The Captain paused a moment. When he began again Parton could not find it in his heart to longer doubt the aged seaman. As he nodded gravely and—surprising influence of an old man's kindly look!—composedly, the Captain smiled with pleasant satisfaction and with a look which Parton interpreted as meaning perfect understanding. But the old man's keen glance was still fixed steadily on his eyes as he went on:

"Tell the Swede, I guess you'd better, that our friend's from Scotland Yard, an' that he's lookin' for some feller that—that's got some di'monds or somethin', that he's run away with. Tell him that I want *all* hands mustered. An' tell him that th' Inspector 'll prob'ly want to search th' hull ship later——"

He paused an instant.

"—Cause o' course he won't find nothin' that he's lookin' for amongst us there in th' cabin, nor amongst th' crew. When you've told him that—you jest come down. He might think 'twas funny if you didn't, an' there ain't no use of givin' him *anythin'* to think about."

He paused again, and Parton, who was, in sheer bewilderment, searching with his eyes the face of this old man who he thought could know so little and yet who acted as if he might very likely know so much, did an unexpected thing. He stepped forward and frankly held his hand out to the Captain. The older man was evidently surprised by it, but took it and shook it warmly. After that there seemed to be no need for further talk. Parton said calmly and almost with a smile, "All right, Captain, I'll go forward with your message, and then I'll join you in the cabin."

"That's right," said the Captain, evidently vastly pleased. "That's jest right. Take a turn or two to git good an' ca'm in mind an' then come down an' jine us. We'll be waitin' for you with th' bottles."

The Captain turned and went below again, and Parton went forward to the forecastle to give the message to the Swede. When he went aft again, he walked without faltering down the companionway stairs and into the cabin, replying to the Captain's introduction of "Inspector Coast of Scotland Yard," quite as calmly as he would have had he had no especial reason for dreading the men who served the public there.

"Mr. Carter's a relation of my wife's," the Captain said, with an easy mendacity which would have amused Parton under any other circumstances. "I

only let him sail here on th' *Lyddy*, 'cause I'm 'fraid of domestic cyclones if I don't—and them, you know, is worse than any storms at sea." He turned to Parton. "This here Mr. Coast here," he said, grinning, "has been told that we've got Ben'dict Arnold, or Guy Fawkes, or *somebody* that they want to put in jail, on board, an' he's come out to see if them rumors that he heard on shore is true. He *has* to have suspicions, don't you see, in order to earn his wages from her Majesty the Queen. An', besides, it's mighty hot ashore, and he figgered that th' trip would kind of cool him off. That about right, Inspector?"

"Well, I'll admit that I'd rather be on this case than as I was yesterday—looking for coniackers through the basement dives. But *you* don't pay taxes to the Queen, so you ought not to object."

"Oh, no!" said the Captain. "I ain't got no right at all to kick! I might be sailin' down th' Channel now if you hadn't come along to search my ship."

"You know better," said the Inspector, tolerantly. "You told me, ashore, that you were going to wait here until the four o'clock mail came down from London. I'm afraid you've got some young woman who is writing to you on the sly!"

"No, I hain't," said the Captain; "but you hain't re'lly delayed me a mite comin' out. By John—a week from now we'd be glad enough to even see a Scotland Yard man!"

Just then the Swede came aft and said that the men were ready. The Inspector, the Swede and the Captain went on deck. Parton remained where he was, glad of the chance to breathe freely for a few

moments. They returned before very long, and Parton, who had made up his mind to join in the jocularity of the occasion as best he could, made a shift to appear merry, as he asked them if they had found what they were looking for.

"Why," said the Captain, "I guess th' Inspector re'lly found what he was lookin' for, when th' cool breeze struck his cheek. Didn't you, Inspector? Come now!"

"No," said the Inspector, "I didn't."

He went over and sat down by Parton on the cushioned bench at the side of the table. Parton felt an involuntary inclination to shrink away from him. Indeed, when their hands touched during the little episode, it was all that he could do to keep his seat, but he held himself in hand so well that he was himself surprised. The Captain's occasional quizzical and inquiring glances still puzzled him. He could not tell what to make of the old man at all. There seemed to be every reason to believe that the Captain was kindly disposed toward him; but there were also many little indications to make him think that the old man knew who he was and knew that he had taken passage on the *Lydia Skolfeld* for no other purpose than to avoid this man and others of his craft.

"Have a drink?" asked the Captain.

Parton nodded, and the Captain poured out a big one for him. There seemed to be a certain kindness even in this small action. It was accompanied by a quick glance that seemed to be sympathetic, and to be intended to tell Parton that he, the Captain, well knew that he was in trying circumstances and needed whiskey. Then the Captain passed the bottle over to the Inspector.

"Well, Inspector, where you goin' to look for him now?" the Captain asked as the policeman poured out a generous drink.

The detective smiled.

"He's more likely safe on the Continent by this time," he replied. "If they would watch the railway stations closer right there in London and give us men on duty along the coast more time to spend at home they'd do better. Queer case, isn't it?"

The Captain looked at Parton first and then gave a quick glance at the Detective. Mr. Coast was busy idling with the bottle. Then he dropped his cigar, and while he had stooped to pick it up the Captain again tipped that strange wink at Parton, as he said:

"By John! It is a queer case, though! Tell Mr. Carter here about it."

"Why, it's like this," said the Inspector. "It seems that a young chap named Henry Parton came up from the Cape the other day—it was a week or more ago—with about sixty thousand pounds worth of rough diamonds."

The Inspector was interrupted at this point by a loud grunt from the berth of the prostrate Mate, and an agitation of the curtains with a hand which trembled violently as do those of men who have drunk habitually and not wisely but too deep. But the shaking fingers abandoned the effort to unhook the fastenings that held the curtains together, and, after another grunt, their agitation showed that he had turned over until his back was to them and, a moment later, he apparently had gone to sleep again.

The Captain laughed.

"I'd clean forgot all about *him*," he said, disgustedly. "You'll want to search *him* before you go.

He's my Mate, an' he's been drunker than a dizzy dog-fish ever since he come aboard last night."

"It's a way that sailors have," the Inspector said, good-naturedly. There had been a quick flash of suspicion in his eyes as the unpleasant noise had first revealed the presence in the cabin of a concealed sleeper; but this went away again.

"I'll have a look at him before I go," he said.
"But to go on with my story.

"This young man, Parton, came home, as I have said, with about sixty thousand pounds worth of rough diamonds which he had brought up from South Africa."

"Steal 'em there?" the Captain asked.

"No," the Inspector said. "He didn't steal them in the first place. From all that we can learn he came by them honestly and through hard work and cleverness that was greatly to his credit."

"Well, what are you a-chasin' of him, then, for?" asked the Captain. "Seems to me to be pretty hard that a feller's got to have you fellers after him jest because he's been lucky. 'Poor but honest' is what folks allus blows about. But if a man is rich but honest has he got to git arrested?"

The Inspector smiled good-naturedly.

"Yes," he said. "We've found one or two people who knew him out there, and they all speak well of him. He comes of a good family, too, although that doesn't seem to mean much when there's a Duke playing a hurdy-gurdy on the streets of London!"

Although Parton had definitely expected it, the actual announcement that the Inspector had really come out to the ship in search of him was a shock to him; but he showed no signs of it except, perhaps,

a slight tightening of the lines about his mouth, too imperceptible to be noticed.

"It's strange about some men's luck," the Inspector went on slowly. "Now I could go out there and stay twenty years and never *see* a diamond—unless I saw it on the finger of the Jew with whom I pawned my overcoat to pay my passage home. Take this very case, for example. There's luck in this very case for someone; but it won't be me!"

"How do you mean there's luck in it?" the Captain asked.

"Why, there's a big reward in it," the Inspector said, with emphasis somewhat bitter. "Now that money would just set me up for life. With what I've managed to put by, it would fix me splendidly! I don't want to wear these boots until I'm too old to wear any!" And the Inspector stuck out a big shoe of the regulation Scotland Yard prison labor type.

The Captain poured out another round of drinks, and Parton gulped his somewhat eagerly. It is unpleasant to sit next a man who could make his whole life comfortable by putting you in jail.

"Struck it rich, did he?" asked the Captain, glancing quickly at Parton, who was making a business of running the Scotch and water around in his glass.

"We are told, as I have said, that he had sixty thousand pounds worth of rough stones when he came home," said the Inspector, "and that can't be far wrong, for they are very careful about the export of diamonds down at the Cape. It's harder to smuggle diamonds *out* of there than it is to smuggle whiskey *in* to England. Every stone that leaves the country must be registered."

"Well, and now he's gone away with 'em!" said the Captain, evidently puzzled. "Why shouldn't he, if he wanted to? If I had sixty thousand pounds worth of anythin', I reckon I'd run away myself. Why, you couldn't see my ship's stern for spray. By John —that's nigh onto three hundred thousand dollars! *Run!* You see these sea-boots, here? Well, they'd just make a dim haze they'd move so fast! Why shouldn't a man run away with his own diamonds? They let 'em skedaddle with other folkses without sayin' nothin'!"

"It's a queer mess," said the Inspector. "I don't know that I blame the young fellow much, even on the say of his father-in-law—the man who is making the charge."

"Got a father-in-law, has he?" said the Captain. "So he's married."

"No," said the detective. "You Americans would call MacFarren his step-father. We speak the same language; but we don't always use the same words to speak it with."

All three men laughed. Parton had been intensely interested in the detective's version of his own story, and had begun to feel less worried about the situation. He wondered if his face had shown his agitation as he had listened to this official version of the affairs at the Russell Square house. The Inspector went on:

"It was this way. His people at home had not heard from him for a long time. It seems that he had been away beyond the reach of the mails for a long time and had been unable to get letters off to them. His mother had married for the second time just before he had left London, five years previ-

ously, and there is reason to believe that perhaps her marriage to MacFarren, whom the young man had known and disliked from boyhood, had something to do with his determination to go. At any rate, when he went he gave her almost all his share of his father's estate. For a while after he reached the Cape she heard from him regularly; but, by and by, after he had gone into the remoter districts she did not hear at all. That was after he had gone beyond the reach of the mails. By and by she began to believe that he was dead, and finally mourned for him as such. Well, after he had made his big strike and got back to a region where he could have written to her, he did not do so; but went home unexpectedly and surprised her instead. But by that time, believing that he had died, she had changed her will so that the only mention of him in it was a provision for a grave-stone to his memory. When he reached home she was ill, and, to please her, he gave her an assignment of all his diamonds—not, as we understand it, or even as MacFarren claims, very loudly, in actual payment of an obligation or anything of that sort, but just to please her because she was ill. That part of the story and the young man's real motive in making the assignment we get from MacFarren's niece, who seems to be pretty fond of him."

Here the Captain looked up at Parton. But Parton's eyes were fixed intently on the detective. What he had just said was very pleasant to the fleeing man.

"She is tremendously pretty—that niece," Mr. Coast continued. "She is all against her Uncle and all for the young man. She says that she believes that he is all right and that the old man is all wrong. Why, she inserted an advertisement in the *Times*,

either with the hope that Parton would see it, or with the idea that it might keep us from thinking that she knows where he is. If it was genuine, and he had not already found out how she felt toward him, it must have pleased him, for it told him very plainly that she sides with him against her uncle. In some ways he's a lucky dog, even if he has had to run away."

"But you haven't told me *why* he ran away," the Captain said.

"Oh," said the detective, "haven't I? Well, the morning after he had given the assignment to his mother she was found dead in her bed. MacFarren found the assignment, which, it seems, she had placed under her pillow. As I have said, it's plain the thing was given to her, not with the idea of making a legal transfer of the property for any good reason, but merely to satisfy her invalid's whim. But, don't you see how clearly it worked out against him? She died before she saw him again, and MacFarren, who was the chief beneficiary under her will, found it and kept it. The diamonds, after that assignment had been made, were his wife's property, and, after her death, by the terms of her will, they became his property."

"Well, by John Quincy Adams!" said the Captain.

"Precisely so," said the detective. "Well, MacFarren must have been very foolish in the way he broke the news to the young man that it was his place to deliver over to him all that he had worked so hard to get down there to the Cape, for he gave him a chance to bolt with them. He took the chance. That is why we are after him now. Mac-

Farren, under the law, is absolute owner of all of Parton's diamonds; but Parton has the diamonds and has disappeared with them. Of course, if the matter should be carried into a civil court, there might be some award to the young man of a portion of his property; but, strictly, he has no legal interest in the diamonds."

" Yet he got 'em," said the Captain, " and worked hard to get 'em!"

" Yes," said the Inspector, " and he will have to work hard to keep them, too!"

" Let's have another drink," said the Captain.
They did.

The Captain laughed.

" I like that feller's way," he said. " I'm sorry he didn't come to my ship. I'd a-helped him git away all right."

" I fancy he's clever enough to take care of himself," said the detective. " He covered up his trail pretty well. He booked passage by circular tour for Paris, and registered his bag through. That threw us off the scent. He didn't use the ticket and the bag went through alone. What he's really done is to take ship for somewhere, the Yard thinks. That's why they have me watching the Channel craft that got away before they put their watch at the docks."

The detective reached into his pocket and from a card case took a clipping from the *Times* which duplicated one which Parton had stowed away in the inner pocket of his own waistcoat.

" Here's a message to him from the old man's niece," he said. " It shows pretty plainly what she thinks about it."

He passed it to Parton, who looked at it with a glance which would have betrayed him if love really were evident when it shines in a man's eyes. Then he passed it to the Captain. The old man read it with a chuckle.

"She's all right, that girl," he said.

"Oh, she's in love with him," the Inspector replied. "I could see that with half an eye. You should have heard her answers to my questions! She said she hoped we'd never catch him, and there's quite a quarrel on between her and MacFarren over what he calls her disloyalty. She may be disloyal to her uncle, but she loves Parton, and she's not disloyal to him. I fancy it would have pleased that young man if he could have seen her. She's as pretty an Irish girl as ever *I* saw, and she meant what she said about his having done just what he should have done, with every ounce of her. Perhaps she's helping him to hide somewhere. We're having her watched. That notice in the *Times* may have been only a bluff to throw us off the track."

The detective became a bit pompous as he added:

"But it's not so easy to throw Scotland Yard men off the track!"

He looked at his watch.

"Well," he said, rising, "you haven't got him, anyway. It's getting along and I must go ashore. It's a strange case, and I don't really know whether I hope that he'll be caught or not. But if he is to be, I hope that I am to be the man to get him. That reward is the biggest that we have had offered in a year. It will set the man who gets it up for life. Still—I don't know—the diamonds, technically, belong to the old man; but by rights and justice, so

long as the mother is dead, I believe that they are the property of the young man who risked his life to get them in South Africa."

The Captain leaned across the table and solemnly shook hands with the man from Scotland Yard.

"And so do I," he said. "By John Quincy Adams, so do I!"

"What do you think about it, Mr. Carter?" asked the detective.

Parton flushed a little.

"I?" he said, half questioningly and with a very pleasant smile. "I? Oh, I hope the man will get away, poor devil."

The Captain looked at him and grinned.

During the entire conversation there had been occasional mutterings from the curtained berth in which the drunken Mate was hidden. They had not, however, been articulate. Now, however, the man seemed to have picked up some words of the conversation, and to be repeating them over and over, thickly. The three men at the table smiled, the Captain very ruefully, as they paused a moment to listen to him as he raised his maudlin voice a little.

"Shoush! Shoush Africa," came from the berth. "I been there. I *been* there!"

This last came with an emphasis, as if someone had contradicted him. The Inspector laughed.

"Your Mate seems to be waking up," he said, grinning. "After he has come to himself he will probably be very unhappy. Men generally are after they have been as drunk as he seems to have been."

"Shoush Africa," mumbled the Mate. "Damn bad place."

"He doesn't like it," said the Inspector, rising.
The Captain laughed uncomfortably.

"I wish I hadn't had to ship him," he said, not very loudly. "I don't like that sort o' fellers on my ship. But, nowadays the master of a sailin' vessel has got to take what he c'n git."

The Inspector and Parton, following the Captain's example, had risen from the little table. The Inspector stood near to the gently swaying curtains which hid the Mate from sight. The man was still muttering words which he had apparently caught from the conversation which had been carried on at the table. It was not especially pleasant to Parton to have him mutter them as he did—there was something almost uncanny about it even. But he knew that they really meant nothing.

"They're like parrots when they're in that state," said the Inspector, with the air of one having expert knowledge of intoxicated men. "He'll be all right in a day or two. He'll be ugly, though, for a time after he comes to himself."

The Mate, in a dim way, evidently caught more of the talk, and was angered by it, for he raised his voice complainingly and swore expertly, but somewhat thickly. But his voice soon dropped again to its old almost inarticulate murmuring of drunken repetitions of the words which had just been used by the three men while they were sitting at the table. Parton heard his own name mentioned in it without surprise and more than once. "Shoush Af'ca," too, turned up again among the mumbled words, but "di'mon's" was most frequent of them all.

"I'd send him ashore an' let him sober up in th' lockup there to Cowes," said the Captain, "if I could

navigate th' ship without 'im." He went to the berth and shook the drunken man violently by the shoulder, and shouted at him: "Hey, there! Wake up!" he said.

But he was repaid merely by a string of drunken oaths and a few elephantine movements of the inert body. The Captain turned away, disgusted, and again the curtains fell without giving Parton a chance to see the face of the intoxicated officer.

"I'll have some one come down an' shake him once in a while while I'm ashore," the Captain said. "Mebbe he'll be able to git up on deck by the time I'm ready to sail ag'in."

The sun was low as the Inspector and the Captain climbed over the *Lydia's* rail. Parton sat upon the quiet deck and watched its fading brilliance. His peace of mind had quite returned to him. As the evening slowly darkened the moon rose, and, as it shone full and fair upon the swaying ship, the Captain returned from shore with the coveted letter from his wife held open in his hand. A good breeze was coming up, and the old man went below to see if the Mate was yet in shape to take his rightful share of the labor of getting the ship under way; but came back sputtering and disappointed.

Until after supper no reference was made to the events of the afternoon. But when the meal was finished, the master of the ship invited his passenger to sit aft upon the deck and smoke with him. Parton, filled with a feeling of great relief now that even the sight of land had been swallowed up in the evening shades, lounged in a steamer chair. The old man crouched contentedly upon the cabin sky-light. At last he spoke, reflectively.

"I thought, by John!" he said, and spat, "'t we'd never git that feller off the ship."

"He *did* make a stay of it," said Parton, carelessly.

"Yes," said the old man reflectively, "he did. I thought, once or twice—but you're all right. You've got *nerve*, by Quincy!"

Parton looked toward him with a start.

"It must a-made you crawl to hear that talk 'bout th' reward," the Captain said. "I felt for ye."

"Why—" the young man began.

The Captain laughed.

"Did you re'ly think you'd fooled me?" he asked. "Why, Mr. Parton, I've knowed who ye be since you was talkin' to me in th' rest'rant there. You dropped a card there, an' I picked it up. At first I wa'n't quite certain about whether I was doin' right or not, in helpin' of ye off. I *thought* I was because I kind of liked the face of ye. But I wa'n't plum, John Quincy Adams certain till I heard that there detective tell the full story of your step-father's hull meanness. After he had told that—an' I suppose he made it jest as bad as he *could* make it—I was full determined that if wust come to wust, I'd git ye shet of him by havin' of him tied, an' totin' of him off along with us." The old man chuckled. "Now wouldn't he felt cheap!"

For a moment Parton found no words to speak. When they came they were but stammers.

"That's all right, now," said the Captain. "Don't ye let this matter worry ye no more. I've heard the prosecution's side, an', while I guess they got th' law with them all right, they ain't got nothin' else. You got the *right*, with *you*."

Parton found his tongue at last. He leaned over and grasped the old man's hand.

"I don't suppose there's any use of my telling you that I am grateful to you," he said.

"No," said the Captain, calmly, "not a mite. I know you're much obliged. There ain't no use in talkin' none about it."

"Well," said Parton, but he could not finish the remark. "Well!" he repeated, lamely.

"It's all right," said the Captain, heartily. "Don't try to say no more along that line. But, now I've heard the worst they've got to say, I'd kind of like to hear your story of th' mess. It's right interestin'."

The Captain was very weary from his labors of the day, and if he had set sail at once the Mate's drunkenness would have made it necessary for him to stand double watch—the Swede having well earned sleep below—a task for which he was by no means eager. So he let the *Lydia* swing at anchor, waiting until Black should really be sober and able to turn out. He sat with Parton on the after-deck and talked.

"Where've you got 'em stowed, all this time?" the Captain asked, speaking of the diamonds.

"In a belt around my waist," said Parton, "and I'd jump overboard with them there and drown with them still there before I'd let MacFarren have them!"

"An', by John! I'd help ye drown, jest to disap'int 'im!" said the Captain, heartily and grinning.

Just before the second officer tumbled out to take the ship, the old man made more elaborate explanation.

"I kind o' reckoned this way," he said, slowly. "When I was a boy, oncet, I was accused, myself, o' stealin'. I *hadn't* stole; but that didn't make no

diff'rence. I'll tell you 'bout it, some day. That was what drove me to go to sea. An' from what th' Inspector—an' I've knowed that feller quite a spell o' years, an' know he's purty ac'rate in what he says on all things: he uset to be aroun' th' docks, in charge o' th' police there—from what he said about th' mess, I kind of figgered that you was bein' hounded, 'thout no jestice in it. I thought that after we had sailed you an' I would talk th' matter over, an' I'd see if I was right. I kind of reckoned that I'd be jedge an' jury for ye. 'F I convicted of ye, then I'd turn ye over to th' p'leece in Boston. 'F I didn't, I'd help ye git away, by Quincy. You've got them di'mon's in a belt around yer waist. I've got *you* on th' *Lyddy*, here. Th' Inspector 'll make a report there to Scotlan' Yard that he s'arched this vessel, an' that you wasn't on it. When we git to Boston, I'll help you further, if you want it!"

As the Captain said this last, there came a slight noise through the open cabin sky-light. He bent down to look in and see what had caused it. When he straightened up, there was a discomfited look upon his face.

"Well, by John Quincy Adams!" he said, slowly, "th' Mate's gittin' up at last. Guess he's sober. Hope—," but there he stopped, and looked at Parton quickly. The young man was gazing calmly out into the darkness that lay upon the sea, and the old man did not finish.

"Guess he's thinkin' about that Nory girl," he said softly, to himself, "an' I won't give him no *new* cause to worry. My! He's had enough!"

A moment later the Mate stumbled heavily up the companionway stairs and, growling, turned about

and came aft to where they were sitting. He laughed. Parton did not see him very clearly in the dim moonlight, but when he stopped over the binnacle lamp there seemed to him to be a familiar look about his bloated, bearded face. But his reflections were interrupted by the Captain, who rose, somewhat stiffly, and clapped his hand on the stumbling officer's shoulder.

"Are ye all right, Mr. Black?" he said, looking at him, earnestly. "If ye think that you can take her now, I'll turn in. You've had a good, long sleep."

The Mate growled out an answer, and the Captain turned to Parton.

"All right, then, Mr. Carter," he said, quickly, "let's go below an' git some sleep."

But Parton's attention had been attracted by that "Mr. Black." He looked at him more sharply. Then he recognized, in the bloated, sodden countenance of the *Lydia Skolfeld's* second in command, the same face that had scowled sullenly at him in South Africa, when he had stopped the robbery of the treasure train with his thumbs held stiff within his trousers pockets.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE CARGO OF "THE LYDIA"

Tb' fiercest lookin' tellers don't allus have tb' most old Nick in 'em, an' watch out for tb' girl with tb' sleepy sheep's eyes. She's like enough to make you jump. Same way with ships.—The Logbook of the Lydia.

To say that the discovery that the Mate of the *Lydia Skolfeld* was his ancient enemy, Black, the bully of the mining camp and afterwards the expelled thief whom he had brought to book in such a disconcerting manner, did not worry Parton would be to give him credit for more self-control than he possessed; but, after thinking the matter over quietly in his berth, he decided that he really had small cause for apprehension. In the first place, he argued, it was unlikely that Black would recognize him at all. When they had known each other at the mine Parton had been a very different person in appearance from the smooth-faced young passenger on the *Lydia Skolfeld*. He had been roughly clad and heavily bearded. And even if he did, at first, suspect that he was Parton, the Captain's friendship for him and his statement that he was a relative of his wife would make him finally decide that the resemblance was a chance one. He considered these things and got comfort from them. And further reasoning quite wiped his apprehensions out, for he realized that he had a much heavier club to hold over Black's head than Black could possibly swing over his. Assuming that the remote possi-

bility that Black had chanced to know all about the affair of the dispute as to the ownership of the diamonds in London had come to pass, and that he should learn that the passenger on the *Lydia* was none other than the fleeing Parton, still he would be afraid to antagonize him by making known his knowledge. The worst charge that could be brought against Parton would be much less serious than that of highway robbery which he could bring against the Mate and which he knew and Black knew could be proved. There were no complications about that charge. There would be no question about the conviction of the man who would lie under it if Parton once set himself to work to make him suffer for it. Before he went to sleep, Parton fully satisfied himself that Black's presence need not worry him.

Black was again in his berth when Parton turned out the next morning; but he appeared soon afterwards, and, when Captain Burgee introduced Parton to him as his relative, Mr. Carter, in quite the same way that he had introduced him to the man from Scotland Yard, Black shook hands with him with quite the surly toleration which might have been expected from such a boor on meeting any stranger. If, as Parton had feared, any part of the conversation below decks about the robbery had drifted to his ears as he lay there drunk within his berth and brought to his muddled brain any associations of South Africa, this had evidently quite passed from his mind, now that he had sobered. On shipboard he was even more a boor than he had been among the men there at the mine. There he had been a mere miner, clothed with no authority, and subject to the same

rules which governed other members of the camp. On the *Lydia* he was an officer, and the natural brutality of his unadmirable bully's nature would have made him a terrifying tyrant among the men had he had as his superior any other master than kind-hearted Captain Burgee. Indeed, during that very day, just after he had tumbled out at noon, Black gave an order in a tone and with a flood of profanity which Captain Burgee did not like and, a few moments later, was called into the cabin to see the master, where the two men doubtless came to an understanding about the general conduct of that ship which considerably toned Black down. At first he had strutted about the deck and talked like a slave-driver; but after this cabin conference his manner was perceptibly softened.

As they went down the last reaches that might, by any possibility, be called the Channel, they were fortunate enough to travel with and through one of those extraordinary processions of the world's craft which are more likely to be met with there, perhaps, than in any other waters on the earth. Of these ships the Captain discoursed learnedly, with many quaint expressions and from many original points of view, which pleased Parton more and more as the distance between the Isle of Wight and the *Lydia Skolfeld* increased. They were sitting aft and enjoying the gorgeous color of the sunset. It was at the season of the British naval manoeuvres, and many small war-craft were steaming about with apparent aimlessness. Among them was a fleet of torpedo boats whose great speed curled the water over their bows in great cascades of white foam. There were twenty or thirty boats in the fleet and the two men

leaned over the rail to watch them as they raced past. Suddenly, with a swish, and a saucy toot of her whistle, one of them shot along at the side of the *Lydia* with great speed and recklessly close. She sat low in the water, her funnel's tops being scarcely higher than the *Lydia*'s rail, and, as she passed, not more than four or five feet separated her from the sailing craft. It was a useless piece of dare-devilment, and the generally placid Captain burst into a fury of wrath. He ran aft, trying to keep alongside of the flying craft as long as he could, and hurling his strange substitute for profanity at the young commander until he knew that his voice by no possibility could reach his ears. When he returned to Parton's side he was breathless from indignation and exertion. He fumed for a few moments and then he burst into a hearty laugh. He beckoned Parton to a seat beside him, and then said, after he had made sure that there was no one near enough to hear the talk:

"Well, Mr. Parton, I guess I'll have to tell you *my* little secret. Oh, I got one. It ain't quite so much a one as your's is, but it 'd a-raised more fun out here in th' Channel than yours ever could if that young rooster'd struck me right. By John! But he'd a-been a badly fooled commandin' monkey if he'd rammed me! Quincy! If he'd hit me jest one good punch in th' right place amidships, he'd a-thought that war was on, an' that it all was happenin' right here! If he's a nice young feller an' has got a soul that's cal'ated to go to Heaven, I reckon it would have had a right smart hustle to git there 'fore his body did if he'd rammed th' *Lyddy* in her middle! Yes, sir, it would a-be'n a pretty race, as they say at

the county fair, with all th' odds in favor of th' body!"

"Why?" asked Parton. "Would he have blown up? I didn't suppose that they carried real explosives on these practice trips."

"That's where th' joke would a-come in," said the Captain, grinning. "Even if they do they only carry a little. You'd think they was all ou'doors dangerous with their war paint on, an' their officers in service uniform an' all that, now wouldn't you? You wouldn't never believe that th' old *Lyddy* here could blow 'em all—th' hull John Quincy Adams fleet of 'em—into Kingdom Come, now would you? But she could, an', what's more, if they should run one o' their noses into her innards jest right she *would!*"

"How?" asked Parton, in surprise.

"Well," said the Captain, slowly, "I might as well tell you. You told me about all your sinfulness—here goes for mine. I've got Lumberite stowed amidships. It's a new explosive that's jest been invented by an Englishman. He wants to sell th' patent, or somethin', to th' United States, an' I'm carryin' over his samples, so to speak. They wouldn't take 'em on none of th' reg'lar freighters. It would knock me out o' my insurance if th' underwriters knew it; but I get a fierce cargo price for it, an' I'm a-gittin' old an' thrifty. Mebbe I'd ought to told you about it 'fore we started, but, somehow, it didn't seem jest nec'sary. If you want to git out an' walk now that I *have* told you, I'll stop th' ship so's 't you c'n climb over th' side nice an' comftable."

"I'll stay on board," said Parton.

"I reckon you're safe enough," said the Captain.
"It's great stuff."

But Parton was no longer listening. The Captain looked at him, and, for a moment, started forward with some fright; but then he settled back in his chair and laughed. It was not a loud and strident guffaw that he emitted, it was a silent, deep, pervading convulsion of great joyousness which shook his frame and pumped the blood into his face until bleeding at the nose seemed the least of the catastrophies to him that must result from it. The gentle swell which had rocked the *Lydia* had changed to a shorter, sharper disturbance, which was, to Parton, very disconcerting. He was beginning to feel that he did not care whether the ship blew up or not. The matter of the diamonds no longer worried him. The sudden appearance of a regiment of Scotland Yard men walking in lockstep upon the water would have been hailed not with horror, but with happiness—for such a stalwart company could have carried him to shore. MacFarren had ceased to rouse his ire. The diamonds were, for the time, mere little lumps of worthless stone. If the Mate had come to him and told him that he then and there proposed to take revenge for his humiliation in South Africa by inflicting sudden death, Parton would have hailed the deed as sweet deliverance. There were thoughts of Norah in his mind; but they were not merry forecasts of a wedding after all the present troubrous times had passed. No. They were sad wonderings as to how she would deport herself in case matters could be so arranged that she could be present at his funeral. He felt certain that that interesting function would not be long delayed. As modern

travellers go, Parton was a good sailor. He had journeyed in the big steamers from Southampton to the Cape and elsewhere without particular discomfort; but he had never before essayed to travel on a sailing ship of the *Lydia's* small tonnage, through a choppy sea like that which now kept her bobbing like a corn kernel in a popper. He looked at the Captain pensively, and the old man, seeing what it was that ailed him, brightened up as if someone had made him a handsome present. It is quite wonderful how people who are not seasick will enjoy the sufferings of those who are. He even laughed.

"I saw a seasick story pictured out once, in *Life*," he said. "There was a han'some lookin' woman in a steamer chair on th' weather promenade deck of a big liner, all wrapped up an' collapsed with seasickness. She was lookin' awful bad, an' th' man who was sittin' in th' chair next to her was apparently feelin' worse than she was. His head had fell over till it was a-layin' in her lap. She was a-leanin' way back with them half-shut, unseein' eyes that seasick folks sometimes has. She wasn't lookin' at 'im.

"Well, while they was a-settin' there, that way, along comes the deck steward with some beef tea an' crackers. You know they allus pass them things around on th' decks o' th' big liners. Th' steward goes up to th' woman, an' says:

"'Won't you have some beef tea, ma'am,' he says.

"She answers back to him, all languid an' lackadaisical,

"'No,' she says, weak like, 'No, I thank you.'

"'Won't your husband have some then?' says the polite deck steward, lookin' down at th' man with his head in her lap.

"‘Oh, I dunno,’ she says, still weak, an’ as if she didn’t take no interest in nothin’, ‘he ain’t my husband. *I dunno who he is!*’

“An’ you could tell by her looks that she didn’t care neither. That’s jest th’ way with seasick folks. They git so they jest don’t care nothin’ about nothin’. All they ask for is jest death or to be let alone. It ain’t seldom that they long for death. Ever hear about the ‘Piscopal minister on th’ *Umbria*? ’”

“No,” said Parton with some difficulty.

“Well, th’ old ship sailed on We’nsday, an’ when Sunday come she had covered a pretty fairish strip of pretty rough ocean. All th’ ministers on board was in their cabins, when th’ time for service come around on that tempestoo-ous Sabbath, ‘ceptin’ one, an’ he was up on deck in a steamer chair, feelin’ pretty certain that he had seen the worst o’ his seasickness, an’ kind o’ braggin’ to them as stopped to speak to him that he was all over it. He hadn’t been below yet, except to sleep. He’d had all his meals on deck, you know, an’ he wasn’t posted on th’ fact that many a man who thinks he’s all over bein’ seasick, an’ goes down into th’ s’loon, where th’ air ain’t very fresh an’ they’s likely to be a smell o’ food an’ things, finds, sudden, that he *ain’t* all over it—not none.

“Well, th’ Captain o’ th’ ship goes up to him, an’ says, says he:

“‘Now, Doctor So-an’-So,’ says he, ‘we gen’ly has service on board of a Sunday,’ says he. ‘Can’t you come below an’ read a chapter out o’ th’ Good Book, an’ talk to th’ passengers a little in th’ saloon? They’s seven other ministers on th’ ship,’ he says, ‘but they’re all seasick,’ he says.

"Well, th' minister, who was feelin' pretty com'f'able on deck there, was a leetle mite proud o' th' fact that he was *on* deck. Mebbe, also, he was a leetle mite inflooenced by th' thought of all them passengers an' sailors that wouldn't have nobody to pray for 'em if he didn't go down an' tend to it, an' so he says to th' Cap'n, says he, that he reckons he feels strong enough to do it.

"So down he goes into th' saloon o' th' ship, where such o' th' passengers as was well enough to git up at all was gathered to hear him preach an' read th' Bible an' pray for 'em. The Cap'n had had prayer books passed around, so that all as was able to speak without bein' afraid that somethin' other'n words would come out o' their mouths if they opened 'em at all was a-makin' th' responses. Th' preacher hadn't no idee that his seasickness was a-goin' to come back to him; but he hadn't been there very long 'fore he knew all about it, an' th' knowledge was anythin' but pleasant. 'Fore he'd got half through with th' Lit'ny, he was pretty certain that he'd have to git on deck ag'in 'fore very long, service or no service.

"But he was game, an' he read away, leadin' th' other folks in their remarks about bein' mis'able sinners, an' feelin' no doubt in his own mind that he was mis'able enough, whether he was a sinner or not. He felt that he was a-goin' whiter 'n whiter in his nice face what had oncen been pleasant pink, an' then he felt th' white turnin' to yaller, an' th' yaller to green, an' his voice begun to give out, an' he felt his legs kind o' swayin' under 'im, even more'n th' motion o' th' ship warranted. But he made up his mind that he'd finish that Lit'ny if it killed him. He

was gettin' pretty well along in his job by this time.

"From all inord'nate an' sinful affections, an' from all th' deceits o' th' world, th' flesh an' th' Devil,' he read, an' th' other folks answered back,
"Good Lord, deliver us.'

"He was pretty near down by this time, but he managed to say,

"From lightnin' an' tempest; from pleg, pestilence an' famine; from battle an' murder an' sudden death—'

"And then th' congregation joined in, just as his final collapse came,

"Good Lord, deliver us.'

"Then he looks around, kind o' wild-like, with that despairin', hopeless glitter in his eyes that only seasick folks c'n git; that glitter that means that there ain't no pleasures in th' world that could make it worth while to live another minute o' such ag'ny, an' he says,

"Not me, Oh Lord! Not me, for I feel—I feel it comin' on ag'in! Not me, Oh Lord, from sudden death!"

"And then he makes a break for the cabin door, an' gits away jest in time to save th' desecration o' th' altar, which was, temp'rarily, one o' th' dinin' tables."

The Captain paused for a moment or two after this. Parton was beginning to feel a little better, and had laughed at the story with some evidences of real mirth in his voice, which pleased the old man.

"It's made me feel kind o' mean to see you settin' around here so yaller an' measley lookin'," he said, "I've felt kind o' mean for laughin' at you an' not ownin' up."

"Owning up to what?" asked Parton.

"Oh, on this matter o' seasickness," said the Captain. "You see, I know what it is to be seasick, all right, though you wouldn't never think so to hear me a-guyin' you. I've been seasick within a month."

"You're joking," said Parton, skeptically.

"No, I ain't," said the Captain, "and there wasn't no joke about it at th' time. You see there's a lot o' difference in th' kind o' muss that water can kick up. Now I don't believe that I ever was or ever could be seasick out here on th' ocean, where the wind's got lots o' chance, an' where there's water enough to make real waves; but back there in th' Channel—well, that's diff'rent. Th' English Channel's th' mos' scand'lous piece o' wet there is on th' face o' th' earth. By John, it's disgraceful th' way it goes on, sometimes. Well, I was crossin' about ten days ago, from Calais to Dover—I'd been in Calais lookin' after a French cargo that I thought I might git if I worked it right—an' I started back on th' night boat. Well, th' Channel was jest a-doin' it's very level worst that night. It wasn't real waves that th' water broke into, neither—it was jest wet eccentricities, that went ev'ry which way. They wasn't as high as th' ones that's swingin' us now; but they jest kep' that mis'able little Channel boat a-goin', like as if she had corns an' her shoes was tight.

"Well, now I tell you, I wasn't use to no such performances, an' I begun to feel right mis'able. I went below into th' cabin o' th' John boat, an' I lay there on a cushioned bunk up against th' curve of her hull. Th' bunks are arranged in three tiers, like th' steps to a set o' stairs, th' bottom ones slopin' forrad to fit her lines. On th' nex' stair above me

there was layin' another man, an' he was jest groanin' somethin' awful. I never heard nothin' like it, before nor since. It was what the reporters call a heart-rendin' sound. But, really, it wasn't his heart that was a-bein' rent.

"Well, I couldn't stand it to hear a feller human bein' in no such distress as that, an' so I ast him if I couldn't help him up on deck, thinkin' th' air would revive him some.

"'Go to thunder, you gosh darned sea-biscuit,' says he. 'Go to—'

"But he couldn't finish insultin' me, an' so I didn't take it much to heart. He was jest about to roll off his bunk, in th' most complete mis'ry I ever see, when I jest grabbed an' carried him up on deck. He got better up there, but, somehow, I begun to feel pretty funny myself. Oh, I know what you've been feelin' durin' these days that you've been sea-sick here on th' old *Lyddy*. I know! I felt all of it there in about ten minutes, an' I think I had *some* emotions that you ain't showed no symptoms of. There wasn't nothin' left to feel after I got through feelin' things up there that night. No, sir, by Quincy, not an Adams thing!

"Well, he helped *me* then, bein' feelin' some better himself.

"By th' time we got to Dover we was both pretty near all right again, although we was still some shaky in our legs as we climbed them slip'ry stairs that takes you up when the tide's low. He suggested that we go some'rs an' sit down for a spell, an' have a drink. We did that an' got right friendly.

"'I'd like to tell you who I am,' he says, 'an' ast you to come down an' come on board—I mean an'

kind o' look my place over,' he says, 'but I don't dast.'

" 'Don't dast!' I says, 'why not?'

" 'Well,' says he, "'ll you promise never to tell no livin' soul that I was seasick?'

" 'Yes,' says I, 'I will, if you'll do the same for me. But I don't see why *you* should feel so bad about it.'

" 'Well,' says he, 'this Channel's worst than th' ocean,' he says.

" 'I know it is,' I says.

" 'It's rotten,' he says.

" 'It's worse,' says I.

" 'It jest ain't *human*,' he says. 'No other strip o' damp on the hull dum map could make *me* sick,' says he. 'My name's Perkins, an' I'm th' cap'n of th' P. and O. liner *Opium*,' he says.

" I looked at him in plum amazement.

" 'Well, you're a John Quincy Adams brave man,' I says, an' I meant it. 'I was expectin' of you to say that you was a wool merchant, or a iron founder, or a corner groc'ry seller,' says I. 'Yes, sir,' says I, 'you're a John Quincy Adams brave man. I was a-goin' to *lie* to you.'

" '*Lie* to me,' he says, puzzled like, 'what was you a-goin' to lie to *me* for?'

" 'Cause I'm a John coward,' I says. 'That's why. I was afraid you'd laugh at me if I told you that I was a sea-captain.'

" 'What,' says he. 'You, too?'

" An' then we almost died a-laughin'. But since that time I ain't never blamed no man for bein' seasick. Nor I ain't laughed at 'em none. 'Tain't nothin' *to* laugh at, that feelin' ain't. They tell a

story 'bout a man that died an' went to Hell. He'd been a terrible bad man all his life, an' when he got down to Hell th' Devil was some puzzled as to how he could punish him. He called some little devils up, an' he says to 'em, says he:

"Burn that feller," says he.

"They went away, but presently they come back, an' they went up to th' Devil, an' says they:

"Your honor, it don't do no good to burn that man."

"Why?" asks the Devil.

"Well," says they, "his mother-in-law lived with 'im for years before he died, an' she kep' him in hot water so much that heat don't have no unpleasant effect on him no more. He likes it."

"Well, drowned him then," says th' Devil, and they went away ag'in.

"Very soon, though, they come back again, an' they says, says they:

"We can't drowned that feller," they says, "he likes it."

"Why?" asks the Devil.

"Well, he lived in one o' them suburban houses that's advertised in th' Sunday papers," they says, "where th' advertisements special said that the place was nice an' dry all th' year 'round," they says, "an' in all kinds o' weather. An' he got so used to havin' to wade home from his train, an' gen'ly so used to havin' water where it hadn't no right to be," they says, "that we can't drowned him," they says.

"By this time the Devil was a-feelin' a little annoyed-like.

"Put 'im in th' cider press an' squeeze 'im," says th' Devil. "Hell cider's runnin' a leetle low, anyhow."

"An' th' little devils went away ag'in.

"But pretty soon they come up to th' Devil,
lookin' kind o' skeert he might take it out o' their
hides, an' they says, says they,

"We had 'im in th' cider press,' they says, 'an'
he went to sleep real nice an' comf'table,' they says.
'It didn't hurt him none. He likes it,' they says.

"Why?' says the Devil.

"He had to ride in New York elevated trains
'fore he died,' the two devils says, 'an' he says he
found it kind o' hard to git along down here until we
put him in th' cider press,' they says.

"Stretch his limbs an' break his bones, then,'
says the Devil.

"An' the two small devils went away, but pretty
soon they come back again an' they says,

"We done it, sir,' they says, 'but it don't punish
him none. He likes that, too,' they says.

"Why?' says the Devil.

"Well,' says the two devils, 'it's this way. He
had a fam'ly of girls to home, on earth,' they says,
'an' he had to buy hats an' corsets, an' ribbons for
'em, an' pay the gas bills when their fellers called on
'em an' sot up with 'em, an' he says he got so used
to havin' his leg pulled an' bein' gen'ly broke, that
it makes Hell seem like home to him to have us
stretch his limbs an' give him compound fractures,'
they says.

The Devil was a-gettin' real mad by this time.

"Well,' says he, 'starve 'im,' says he. 'I'm
a-goin' to punish that man,' he says, 'if it ransacks
th' resources of all Hell,' he says.

The two devils went away, and they didn't come
back for near a week, 'cause it takes some time to
starve a soul, it seems.

"‘Well,’ says the Devil, ‘have you been a-starvin’ of that feller?’

"‘Yes, your honor,’ they says.

"The Devil grinned, self-satisfied-like.

"‘Well, he don’t like that, does he?’ he asked.

"‘Yes, your honor,’ they says, dodgin’ back, ‘an’ he’s gettin’ fat,’ they says, ‘on the worst board we have in Hell,’ they says. ‘He used to live in a Brooklyn boardin’ house, your honor, an’ he says th’ only fault he’s got to find with our fare down here is that mebbe it’s a leetle richer’n what he’s been used to and might give ‘im indigestion.’

"‘Well,’ says the Devil, ‘put him in a tight steel box, an’ keep him close to th’ fire,’ he says. ‘Make the box jest big enough to crowd him into,’ he says. ‘We’ll see how he likes that,’ he says.

"A day or two later he sent for the two devils to come an’ report.

"‘Well,’ he says, ‘is that feller punished any yet? He don’t like his new quarters much, I guess. Reckon they’re a leetle too tight fittin’ an’ too warm,’ he says.

"‘Well,’ says the two devils, careful-like, ‘he *is* complainin’ some.’

"‘What’s he a-complainin’ about?’ asks the Devil, smilin’ in a satisfied sort of a way, as if to say that he knowed he’d raise Hell with that feller some way or ‘nother.

"‘Well,’ says the smallest one o’ the two devils, ‘he used to live in a New York flat, an’ he’s complainin’ about havin’ too much room. But he says this one o’ your’n is th’ first flat he ever lived in that was well heated,’ they says.

"‘*What!*’ says the Devil, ‘Great Scott! Send

that feller home. I ain't got nothing here that he don't like. Send him home,' he says. 'He's a weight on my mind,' he says. 'I can't stand the worry of 'im no more,' he says.

"Well, the two devils went away, and the Devil himself forgot all about th' matter, bein' busy receivin' a large consignment o' souls that had been sent to him after th' roof had fell in on a ward caucus in Philadelphia. He jest does love to torture a Philadelphia politician, an' he'd got ev'ry single soul whose body died in that there accident. But presently his amusement was interrupted by a terrible yellin' from over near the gate an' he thought all Hell'd broke loose, an' pretty soon four husky devils come along with stretchers on which was layin' th' battered forms o' th' two devils that had gone to send th' man home.

"'What's th' matter?' asked the Devil.

"'Well,' says the one o' the two devils that had voice enough left to speak with, 'he near killed me, an' I guess he's done for my partner there on th' other stretcher.'

"'How was that?' asked the Devil.

"'Well, we tried to put him out, your honor, jest as you told us for to do,' says the injured devil, 'but he wouldn't go. He fought us somethin' fearful, an' you see what he done to us.'

"'What 'd he git mad about?' asked the Devil.

"'Well,' gasps the poor little devil that had got hurt, 'he said his fam'ly had moved to Chicago, an' that if we put him out of Hell he'd have to go there to jine 'em.'

"'Well,' says the Devil, thoughtful-like, an' with a suspicion of a red hot tear on his left eye-winker,

'I may be the Devil, but I ain't mean enough to do that to *nobody*. You can let 'im stay in Hell,' he says, 'but I got to find some way o' punishin' 'im,' he says.

"An' then the Devil sat a long while an' thought. It was mighty hard to find anythin' that wasn't better'n what the man had known on earth, an' he was pretty near to bein' stumped. But bimeby an idee come to him.

"'Go git me the English Channel and one o' th' Calais-Dover boats,' he says. 'I got that feller up against somethin' *now* that he won't like,' he says, 'an' I'll eat the spike on my tail if I hain't,' he says.

"So they sent up an' got th' English Channel and a Calais-Dover boat for the Devil, an' he had that poor feller put on board that boat, an' he had th' wind devil kick up a cross sea on th' Channel—an' by John Quincy Adams, that feller was the worst punished soul in all Hell that night."

After the Captain had told a story, it was his habit to slowly rise and walk away from the person to whom he had told it, if the circumstances were such that it was possible for him to do so.

"I git up an' git out for a minute or two, anyhow," he said in explanation, "out o' pure decency. You see, it's good for me an' good for the feller that's been listenin' to me. If he don't feel like laughin', through not considerin' my story funny, why he don't *have* to. That saves him the chance of some misery. An', also, it saves *me* th' pain I'd feel if he *didn't* laugh."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE CAPTAIN'S MISGIVINGS

If you feel that you've re'ly got to tell a secret, go somewhere where it's dark an' you'll be all alone. Then keep your mouth shut.—*The Logbook of The Lyddy.*

Parton's recovery from his seasickness was slow, but, as it gradually left him, he felt, as most people do after such experiences—rejuvenated. He ate ravenously, and for hours every day, walked about the small deck space offered by the *Lydia* for purposes of promenade. It was at this time, but always when the mate was below, sleeping, that he began to indulge the Englishman's innate love of cold baths. He was careful not to strip at a time when Black was likely to be on deck, for when he stripped he of necessity took his belt off for the moment. He did not care to have the Mate see it, not because he had the least idea that the man would guess the real value of its contents, but merely because he knew he was a thief and had no desire to make him think that there was anything whatever in his possession which might by any possibility be worth the stealing. He had almost ceased to worry about the chance of the man's recognition of him, but, at the same time, Black occasionally threw a glance at him which worried him a bit. There was no definite recognition in it; but there was a hazy wonder which sometimes seemed to be just on the edge of recognition.

At any rate he was suspicious enough of possibility to prevent him from ever stripping and thus showing the belt except when the Mate was below and presumably asleep.

Several hours of every day were devoted to conversation with the Captain, for whom Parton's liking was beginning to develop into real affection. It was not until long after Parton had fully recovered from his seasickness that the Captain increased his suspicions of the mate, by reverting to the episode which had occurred that evening when he had suddenly risen from the cabin skylight with the declaration that they were a pair of fools.

During the entire morning the old man had roamed about the ship with an activity which was almost feverish and very unwelcome to the men. He insisted, always, that the *Lydia* should be kept in ship-shape, but this morning he was more than ordinarily exacting, and kept the men at work continually at scrubbing and polishing, small repairing and painting. It would be inaccurate to say that he acted as if he were ill at ease; but it is true that he busied himself even more than usual, and that, by the time supper was over and the men were forward and he was aft, sitting quietly by Parton's side and watching the early evening sky, both he and the crew were thoroughly tired. It was the Mate's watch below, and it was possible, at times, to hear the officer's snores through the open cabin skylight. Parton laughed as one of them, which seemed to have been born only after a severe nasal struggle, drifted out to them, and the Captain smiled, too. Then he rose quietly, and beckoned to Parton to walk farther aft. When they had reached the

Lydia's after-rail, they leaned over it and watched the ship's wake for a few moments, the white, phosphorescent, eddying foam gleaming prettily in the water straight back of the ship until it was lost in the gloom of the approaching night.

They discussed the matter of the final disposition of the jewels, and both agreed that it would be dangerous to attempt it for a long time after the *Lydia* reached Boston.

"I don't see that you're goin' to be much better off than you would be if you didn't have 'em," said the Captain. "You simply can't sell 'em—'twouldn't be safe for a minute. I know a sea captain that went home oncet to his young wife an' said that he wouldn't never go to sea ag'in without takin' a little pig along with him. He didn't make no explanations of this resolve, he jest announced it; but th' Cap'n was inordinate fond of fresh pork. Well, he forgot all about it when he was a-layin' in stores for his next v'yage, but th' day he sailed his wife come down to th' dock, an' she had in a kind of coop th' purtiest little pig you ever see. It was all nice an' fat—an' pink. You've seen 'em! One o' them kind that your teeth jest aches to bite into, an' your mouth waters for a suck o' their juice after roastin'.

"Well, th' Cap'n thanked his wife for a-bein' of so thoughtful.

"'Ain't he a dear little creetur?' says she. 'I'm so glad you like him!'

"'He'll taste awful good some day when I hain't had no fresh meat for a spell,' the Captain says in answer.

"'Taste,' says she. 'Taste! I brought that pig down for you to *pet!*' she says. 'His name's

Claude,' she says. 'An' if you go an' kill him I won't never, never forgive you,' she says to him.

"An' th' Cap'n knew she wouldn't, neither, an' so he didn't dast to kill that mis'able little pig. He jest carried him around th' world, that v'yage, as a passenger. He told me, afterwards, that it was *the* most aggravatin' experience he ever had had—a-sailin' th' sea over an' unable to kill that John pig that was a-gruntin' 'bout th' deck an' havin' a good time, while his very heart was yearnin' for a chancet to set his teeth into th' meat that hung so fresh an' juicy on its ribs.

"So far as I c'n see, you're goin' to be in 'bout the same position 'bout your diamonds when you git ashore as th' Cap'n was about his pig after he got to sea. You'll be rich all right, but you'll have to work for wages in order to pay your board an' buy your clo'es!"

"Well, I suppose," said Parton, "that I can continue to carry them around with me after I get ashore, just as I do now while I'm on board ship. I can do so for a while, anyway, and—"

"Don't you say a word to me nor nobody 'bout where they be whilst you're on this ship," interrupted the Captain, quickly. "They's somethin' I've got to tell ye. You remember th' time we was a-settin' on th' cabin skylight, talkin' about them di'mon's, when suddenly I begun to cuss an' got up? That was 'cause I happened to re'lize that what we'd be'n sayin' might a-be'n overheard down in th' cabin, if there'd be'n anybody there to overhear it. It's astonishin' how plain you can overhear down there anythin' that's goin' on on deck when th' sky-

light's open. By John! It's astonishin'. Now, as you remember, Mr. Black was down there."

"He was too drunk to hear anything," said Parton.

"Drunker," the Captain admitted, "than that b'iled owl they tell about; but it's funny about drunken folks. They've got th' most astonishin' tricks with 'em. I had an uncle, oncet, who was allus in trouble with his wife, 'cause he couldn't never remember th' text that the parson preached about on Sabbath. She couldn't never go to church, havin' mis'ry in her back most awful, an' bein' barely able to crawl around th' house. Well, now, Sunday after Sunday he tried to keep that text stuck in his mind for her till he could git home an' call it off to her; but he jest couldn't do it. He re'ly tried to, an' he re'ly couldn't. It aggravated both on 'em. Well, all right, by John. Well, they was folks who hadn't never teched a drop of nothin' spirituous to drink, an' didn't know th' taste on it. One Sat'dy night a pedlar come along. He was a tin pedlar, an' sold 'em quite a mess o' things takin' eight, nine bags o' stuff that they'd saved up—rags, an' old paper, an' old iron an' old tin, an sech—in payment. It was dretful cold that night, an' they let him stay over night, ruther than make him drive fifteen miles through th' frost to th' nex' town.

"My aunt was feelin' wuss'n usual th' nex' mornin' an' uncle wasn't none too well. Fin'ly he said, th' pedlar did, that he had some med'cine that he wanted for 'em to make a try of out in his wagon, and he'd go an' git it. He'd be'n wantin' a drink most awful but he hadn't dast to take it, 'cause liquor drinkin' folks wasn't pop'lar none amongst New England farmers

in them days. Well, he goes out to th' barn an' to his wagon, an' he comes in with a big bottle o' whiskey, 'thout no label on, an' he tells 'em that that was th' med'cine that he took. He took some an' then he ast them if they didn't want to try it. Well, now, all New England folks is jest death on patent med'cine. More health has be'n ruined by it down there than there ever has been by hard work. So they each took quite a lot, an' Uncle, after he had loaded up pretty well on it, he went off to church. Well, when he come home he was red-eyed an' a little thick o' speech from th' effect o' th' hot meetin' house on top o' th' bad whiskey that th' pedlar had give 'em for med'cine, an' he acted kind of strange like; but Aunt she didn't notice it none, 'cause she had jest a plain jag on, herself. An' what was her amazement when she found that Uncle—at last, by John Quincy Adams!—Uncle, he remembered what th' text was an' told her every word of it and where it was with little x's an' small i's an' all, verse, chapter, an' book complete.

" 'It's th' pedlar's med'cine that's a-done it for us,' says my aunt, stutterin' a little from th' whiskey—poor, innocent old woman!—but very happy. 'An' it's made me feel better, too.'

" I saw this, for I'd come over for the mornin' to stay with her, as I gen'ly did of Sundays.

" 'It's th' pedlar's med'cine,' she says ag'in, wavin' her hand, boozy like, before her face. 'An' he's promised to bring a bar'l of it out with him nex' time he comes, leavin' with us what he's got this time, so that we shan't want for it till he gits th' bar'l here!'

" But it was true enough, all right, that Uncle *did*

remember th' parson's text that day for th' first time in his life. Since then, nobody can't make me believe that whiskey 'll allus make a man deef, or make him forgetful enough to be depended on for it. An' after that, an' until them two went down, unconscious of it, into drunkards' graves together, th' old man never oncet forgot th' parson's text on Sabbath. So don't you figger that the Mate forgot what he overheard us say that day, if he *did* overhear us, jest 'cause he had be'n drinkin'!"

Parton laughed at the Captain's story; but he did not laugh at the possibility it suggested. The old man was plainly worried, and it was because of the real anxiety and unhappiness in his face that Parton did not tell him then and there about the fact that he had known the man before, and had given him good cause to hate him. The old man had taken the younger one so frankly and entirely into his heart, and so thoroughly made his affairs his own distressing problems, that Parton had not the heart to impose on him the new worry which sometimes oppressed him greatly. He merely assured him that he would, in the future, be careful not to give the mate a chance to learn anything more about him, and the Captain announced that he should no longer call him "Parton," even when they were alone, for fear that it might slip out unawares in the Mate's hearing and thus reveal his identity to him.

The Captain went on about the Mate:

"I'm mighty sorry to say it; but I don't believe that that man's any better than a yaller dog—that is, as a man. As a sailor, he's bang up. He's a reg'lar Yankee Doodle sailor, an' Yankee Doodle means the best they is. But as a *man*, by John, he re'lly ain't

worth mentionin'! He'd be a sea-lawyer if he was before th' mast, and he'd be a brute to th' men if he was in full command. As it is, he's their chum. And th' best way to spoil a sailor, next to abusin' of him, is to git chummy with him. I don't like him and I don't count on him, and I don't want you to like him nor to count on him."

"Have you noticed anything about him which has especially made you suspicious?" Parton asked.

"Well, he asks too many questions about you," said the Captain. "I'm worried about him. I'm afraid that the chancet o' gittin' that there big reward would go a long sight further with him than it would with some men. I'm John sorry! Quincy! I wouldn't a-had you bothered this way after you come aboard my ship for a new penny. At first I thought I wouldn't say nothin' to you 'bout it, but this mornin', when you was a-strippepin' for your bath there in the waist, an' took that belt off an' laid it down there by your clo'es, I caught him half a-hidin' behind the companion half-door and spyin' on you. That made me make up my mind to tell you what I thought. Now I don't know whether them di'monds is in that belt or not, and I don't want to know; but I guess I know, an' I reckon that if they's anybody else on board that knows they *is* any di'mon's in th' cargo, *they*, too, could give a cute guess as to whereabouts they be. Everybody that's seen you gittin' your wettin' down has seen that belt. Black sure has, Now I wouldn't lay it down that way ag'in when I was gittin' of my bath."

"What would you do with it?" asked Parton.

"Oh, I don't know," the Captain answered. "I reckon it's all right enough jest where it is."

"But you couldn't wear it while you bathed, and you just said, now, that you wouldn't lay it down on deck! Would you leave it in your cabin for him to overhaul if he saw fit?"

"John Quincy Adams—no!" the Captain answered. "The way I'd figger out that matter is that I wouldn't strip on deck."

"But there's no other way to get a bath," said Parton.

"No. That's so," the Captain answered. "When I was havin' of th' *Lyddy* built I clean forgot a bathroom in her. You may have also noticed that I neglected to have a billiard parlor fixed for in her plans."

"But—" Parton began to laughingly protest.

"What do you want of baths at sea?" the Captain asked, interrupting. "You *can't* git dirty. You don't do nothin' to make you sweat none, and I ain't never noticed that th' North Atlantic Ocean was much dusty. 'Tain't never dry enough. An', while it may be Quincy nice to be so Adams clean that you have to wear suspenders 'cause your clo'es won't otherwise stay on, it'll be much nicer, *I'm* a-thinkin', to have them stones along with you when you sail in to Boston harbor. No human bein' ever needed half so many baths as you've been gittin'. You must think that you're John Quincy Adams dirty!"

"S'pose he should pass th' word around that that there belt held three hundred thousand dollars worth o' di'mon's! Even if he ain't the kind I take him for they's other men here on this ship that ain't exactly millionaires, and there ain't one here but me and mebbe you thatwouldn't like to be. S'pose I was to be took sick; 'tain't likely, but I *have* been sick

at sea. I've had headaches that have jest laid me in my berth quicker'n scat an' twice as long. You see, inasmuch as they ain't nothin' else much in my head, there's jest a sight o' room for ache. Then th' Mate'd be in command. Mebbe I might die. See? Don't take no chances—Mr.—Mr. Carter. Don't take no more chances. An' even if I shouldn't be laid up—you sometimes go on deck at night when I'm asleep. Did you ever stop to think how awful easy it would be for you to have a pulley block or somethin' drop on you an' knock you overboard *after* some kind friend had took that belt off an' saved your di'mon's, all quiet like?"

This made Parton ponder. He laughed at what the Captain said about the necessity for baths, of course, but he gave up his little luxury just the same. He was as careful as he could be to avoid talking with the Mate when he was in his berth—which on the *Lydia Skolfeld* meant a space almost as large as that given to a small stateroom on a passenger steamer—and he watched him with a new and not a pleasant interest, although he could only occasionally get a glimpse from his eyes that seemed to hint that he had guessed who he was, and might have overheard the talk about the diamonds.

Before long he was glad that he had been upon his guard, for he saw, or thought he saw, a growing tendency on the part of the Mate to sound him on subjects which might indicate that the Captain's half-formed suspicions were justified. Finally, indeed, small remarks and chance actions led Parton to the surprising conclusion that the Mate had penetrated his identity indeed, but thought, and was comforted by the thought, that Parton had not

recognized *him*. Black talked with him whenever he got a chance to have a word which the Captain could not overhear, and it was evident that by questions intended to be shrewd he was trying to confirm his almost certainty. Whether or not he knew about the diamonds, Parton was not sure, but, even if he did not, the situation was not pleasant, for, once recognized, Parton knew that Black would try to find some way to get revenge for the episode in which the derringers had been supposed to figure strongly, but had not. Plain hatred would be enough excuse for violence when the chance came.

Had it not been for this unhappy state of things, Parton would have enjoyed this stage of the voyage hugely. But he was robbed of the pleasure of his baths, and, as a matter of common caution, he was very careful about standing near the rail when the Mate was alone with him on deck. But the seasickness had left him with an appetite such as he had never known before; and instead of disliking the motion of the ship, he had come to love her gentle sway. Good winds made what would otherwise have been hot days very pleasant ones, and blew the *Lydia* along her course with gratifying speed. The Captain's stories held out well, good books were in the cabin, and, finally, Parton again decided that even if the Mate recognized him, he would not be brave enough to try to trip him up and throw him overboard and that when they reached the shore, his own knowledge of the Mate's South African wrong-doings would be a sufficiently powerful motive to make the man keep silent, even if he had listened to that conversation by the skylight.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A NOVEL SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX

If you keep your keg out o' sight, you won't tempt no one to drink liquor--an' you'll have more for yourself.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

But one day Parton made a strange discovery. He went on deck with a book in hand, but returned almost immediately to see the Mate hurriedly emerging from his, Parton's, berth. Black colored and laughing uneasily, tried to pass the episode off with the statement that he had contemplated the robbery of some cigars. This would have been excusable, although hardly to be expected, for Parton usually left a box of cigars on the cabin table to be used by the Captain and the Mate if they desired. The stock which he had purchased at the lodging house from the melancholy Jew was quite sufficient to last the voyage out, and he was, therefore, very generous with them. By chance he had forgotten it that day, and it *was* possible that the Mate had really been looking for it. Parton, however, did not believe it. He believed that he had been searching to see if valuables were concealed there. He said nothing to the Captain of this episode, however.

During the afternoon Black went aft where Parton was sitting half asleep. He made no mention of the episode in the cabin, but began a conversation which included too many personal questions to suit Parton. It dealt, indefinitely, with South Africa and produced

the thought in Parton's mind that Black had vaguely suspected his identity with that of the Parton of South Africa, and was trying either to confirm or dissipate his suspicions. Before the talk ended, Black asked him why he had stopped his morning baths.

"Oh," said Parton, "I merely became tired of taking the trouble every day, I suppose. A man gets lazy here at sea."

"I didn't know," replied the mate with a grin, "but that you had got afraid of showin' that money belt any more."

As Parton glanced at him, he saw, with disgust, that same expression of low cunning on his face which had always been there during his most offensive moments in South Africa. "I thought, perhaps," the Mate went on, "that you was afraid some tramp might drift up and steal it when you wasn't lookin'."

Then Parton realized that the Captain had been right. The Mate's attention *had* been attracted by the belt! Parton reproached himself roundly for his piece of foolishness. Now, he *knew* that the Mate had been looking for something other than cigars when he had caught him in his berth.

And the matter did not stop there. During the week that followed Parton had reason to believe that while Black thought that he was asleep or otherwise safely engaged upon deck, he more than once visited his berth; but he did not succeed in catching him at it although several times he entered the cabin at a time when he thought that his coming would be unexpected. He told nothing of these episodes and suspicions to the Captain, because, it seemed to him, the old man had something wrong

with him, although he declared that he felt quite as usual.

It was on the evening of their fifteenth day out, when, because of light and baffling winds they had covered less than one-third of the distance to the port of Boston, that while they were sitting at the table before the evening meal, the Captain suddenly put his hand to his head and turned singularly pale.

"By John Quincy Adams!" said he, ripping out all three of his pet expletives at once without any preliminary leading up to them, "but that *was* funny!" and went quickly to the deck.

Parton followed him at once. He had gone to the weather rail and was holding his face into the wind as if the feeling of the cool breeze pleased him.

"What's the trouble, Captain?" asked Parton, anxiously.

"Oh, nothin' much, I guess," said the Captain. "Once in a while the cabin seems to get awful stuffy. Time was when I c'dl sleep in th' hermetic sealed fo'c'sle of a Grand Banks smack, an' never smell it nor feel th' need of air. But I guess I'm gettin' old. Anyhow, it's sometimes awful hard for me to stay below for any len'th of time."

"Shan't I have your supper brought up here?" said Parton, with some solicitude in his voice.

The Captain turned on him suddenly and peevishly.

"Now, by John!" said the old man, "what do you think I am? Do you s'pose I've got to be 'tended to by any passenger? There ain't nothin' th' matter with me. I jest felt a leetle mean for a minute. Uset to feel mean oftener when I was twenty than I do now. No. I don't want my sup-

per brought up here. If I want to eat I can go down an' eat. Think I'm a baby?"

And as Parton turned away, he recalled, almost with a shock, what the old man had said about the possibilities of illness. If anything should happen to the Captain would he be able to avoid having trouble with Black?

A day or two after this the Captain decided to make an inspection of the forward hold. There was a little more water there than there should be, and he asked Parton if he would like to go with him. He had entirely recovered his old spirits, and once or twice Parton thought he was on the verge of asking him to pardon the recent outbreak, but the request never came.

Parton had never before been in the hold of a cargo ship, and the trip interested him. To his surprise he found that she was laden, forward, with great, square logs about twenty feet long and two feet wide by a foot and a half thick. They were mahogany timbers from the far East, reshipped at London, and the Captain considered them a good cargo. They packed closely, and were heavy enough to ballast well. The old man, in this as in many other things, displayed curious miscellaneous knowledge, and told Parton many things about the timber which were entirely unconnected with its shipment as a sea cargo. He called his attention to an augur hole in the end of each log and explained that these holes were bored to test the integrity of the timber. He told about a certain insect which often greatly damages mahogany, by perforating the very heart of a tree, sometimes eating out a tunnel through the greater part of its length. This, of

course, would greatly decrease the value of the timber, and the shrewd, up-country dealers sometimes tried to conceal the depredations of the pest by filling in the holes with plugs or sawdust, covering the exposed end over so carefully and making it so closely resemble the end of a sound tree heart that buyers were deceived, and paid for imperfect timber the same price as for perfect sticks. This practice had become so prevalent, the Captain went on to say, that nearly all mahogany submitted for export was now tested by those augur holes in each end of the log. A few turns of the bit would show whether the heart was sound and solid or had been filled, and the aggregate damage thus done to a thousand logs would be much less than the loss from even a few timbers which were imperfect through their entire length. Parton glanced at these holes carelessly at first, and then examined them with real interest, probing into them with a thin rod, and finding that in one of them the hole ran in a distance of more than three feet.

Then, while they were still discussing the matter, Parton stepped under the hatch to see if anyone were near to it, so that their conversation was likely to be overheard. After he had fully satisfied himself upon this point, he said to the Captain:

"I believe that Black recognizes me and means to rob me if he can. If he dared, he would threaten to hand me over to the police on our arrival, thus trying to force me to give up something to him. He is too much afraid of what I may tell about him to do that, and so he has, I think, been trying to find some way of robbing me outright."

He then told the Captain, in detail, all his reasons for being suspicious, and added:

"Now, I don't want to have those diamonds about me, or about my cabin, any more."

"You're right," said the Captain. "I was a fool ever to have shipped him."

"Well," said Parton, "he only guesses that the stones are in the belt. They may not be there for all that he knows, but I was exactly the kind of an ass that you said I was, and directed his attention to it by making a display of it when I bathed on deck. Now what it has occurred to me to do is to come in here and put the stones in the end of one of these logs. Then I can stuff some money and odds and ends into the belt, and leave it somewhere where he can inspect it without much risk. I have no doubt that he would take advantage of such an opportunity. If he is once assured that the diamonds are not in the belt, I believe that he will search in other parts of the cabin, and, not finding them, will conclude either that I have fooled you and have no such stones, or that I have not brought them with me. That will save any row. I think it would be wise to give him every opportunity to search. You see, even if he did not succeed in robbing me on board, it would be better if he thought he was wholly wrong in any belief which he has formed that I have diamonds with me. If he believes it a lie, he will scarcely run the risk of imperilling his own liberty and making himself ridiculous by notifying the police of my arrival when we reach Boston. I'm a good deal worried about him as things stand. What do you think of the plan?"

"Well," said the Captain, "you're showin' some

sense at last. It's a John good notion. Them logs wasn't intended nor designed to be no Safety Deposit vaults, but I guess they'll make good ones. Then, if you should fall overboard, I could auction 'em off on the prize package plan. I might re'lize quite a lot by it. *I hate to know anythin' about so much money, though, by Quincy, my nerves ain't strong.* We uset to sing a song that had consid'able in it about 'Yield not to Temptation, for Yieldin' is Sin,' in the Sunday-school, when I was a boy, but I'm afraid it only sunk into me skin deep. But, seriously, I'll be mighty glad to have you git 'em off'n your body. I've been worse worried than I wanted to say."

They went on deck a moment afterwards, and carried on their conversation by the after rail where they were out of hearing of either the man at the wheel or any curious ears that might be listening under the cabin skylight:

"Parton," said the Captain, "I want to talk real plain to you. I want to tell you that I'm mighty sorry for you, an' if ever I act rotten or anythin' you'll know it ain't because I don't *like* you. I've taken a real shine to you. I don't believe in not tellin' a man when you like him, any more'n I believe in pretendin' to like a man when you don't. I never knew a man to be in a meaner position than you be through no fault of his own. I want you to understand how sorry I am. I know it can't be no fun to be branded as a thief when you've simply took what was yours and what you'd worked for, and like enough risked your life to git.

"Why, I c'n remember jest as plain as day the

first time I ever had that feelin'—only there was this difference—I *was* a thief. *You ain't.*"

Parton made an incredulous exclamation.

"Yes, sir," said the Captain, "it was the first time I ever robbed anybody. I was near fourteen years old. You mind that I ain't a-sayin' that it was the *last* time I ever robbed anybody, don't you? You don't believe I ever lived through fourteen years without stealin'? Well, I did. Mebbe I was too young to know, you know! I was strawberrin' for Deacon Borden. I knowed that he was a-goin' away the next mornin'. He promised me two cents a row, and I weeded twelve rows, workin' hard all day. There was eighteen rows in the patch. It was nine o'clock at night when I got through with them twelve rows—John! But them rows was longer'n the road to Heaven! I was purty consid'able tired out when I went in to see the Deacon. He was a good-natured old cuss, and he just looked at me and grinned.

"Well, sonny," he says, "you're a hard-workin' boy. I see you out there weedin' by lantern light. There ain't many boys 'd do that. You all through?"

"I nodded, an' that nod was a lie. They was six rows to do yet; but I was so Quincy tired I didn't care whether I lied or not.

"Well, by Adams!" says the Deacon—it was him taught me to swear so, the immoral old galoot—"you've earn't your pay. There's eighteen rows. Now how much is eighteen times two cents?" he says.

"It's thirty-six cents," says I.

"My!" says he. "Right up an' a-comin' for your

money like a chicken to a dough dish, ain't you, sonny?"

"An' he give me the thirty-six cents.

"I took it; but I hadn't earned but twenty-four cents, in spite of the fac' that I'd begun 'fore daylight, almost, an' 'd worked till long after dark. I was awful tired, an' I thought that when I once got home an' to bed I'd go to sleep like a shot; but I didn't. No, sir. 'Long about two o'clock in th' mornin' I was out a-weedin' them other six rows! Took me till most time for the other folks to git up, by John Quincy Adams!"

"But all the same, I was a thief, an' I knew I was a thief. I'd stole them other six cents, an' all the extry weedin' that I could do 'tween then an' doomsday wouldn't make me nothin' but a thief.

"Fin'ly my conscience got after me so bad that I up an' told the Deacon 'bout it. He most died laffin'. That merriment o' his'n might a' had a bad effect on my morals if my step-father hadn't heard about it an' everlastin' wallopped the life half out o' me. John! But he did whale me good!"

"An' so," added the Captain with a screwing up of his weather-beaten face, "an' so my soul was saved for th' time bein'. The good them beatin's did me! It's allus seemed to me kind o' disrespec'-ful to God—th' notion some folks seems to have that he put th' seat of a boy's soul an' the seat of his pants so close together!"

"Well, I ain't been dishonest much, since. That is, I ain't actually stole much—barrin' a few kisses that I stole of Lyddy whilst we was courtin'." He chuckled. "She uset to say that that was jest *grand larceny!* Guess she liked it a'most as well as I did,

an' so I guess that don't count up much ag'inst my soul on th' Angel Gabe's big books. But I can't trust myself, even now. No, sir. Not a mite. Quincy! I don't want to know where your Adams di'monds is; but I ain't got nothin' against your plan. If you're specially interested in studyin' the innards o' mahogany logs, why I ain't a-goin' to stop you from pursuin' your inclination in th' hold o' the *Lyddy*. I'll try to arrange it so that you can do it without attractin' the attention of the Mate, 'though that ain't the easiest thing in the world, b' John Quincy Adams!"

It was later in the same day when the Captain, making certain that Mr. Black was forward with the men attending to some alterations to be made in the fittings of the forecastle, seated himself again near Parton, and quickly passed to him a small package tied up in newspaper. This held a piece of wood, carefully whittled round, and about an inch and a half in diameter.

"That's a plug," said the Captain. "It'll jest fit into one of them augur holes. After I'd stowed away the stuff, if I was you I'd put that plug in, an' then, John! how I'd mark that log! You wouldn't gain much if, after we got into port, you wasn't able to identify your stick o' timber. There's four hundred and eight of 'em down there, an' it 'ld sure attract attention if you was to go an' sound the innards of all of 'em after we got into dock. Better mark it with this."

The Captain pulled from his pocket a little steel die, such as is used for stamping the tinware of vessels to prevent it from being stolen by sailors and sold to junk shops.

"Or no," he said. "By Quincy, no, you don't!"

He looked at Parton in a sly way as if that young Englishman had almost enticed him into a trap.

"No you don't, by Adams! No, *sir!* You don't do nothing of *that* sort. *I'd* know *that* markin', an' I don't *want* to know that log. No, sir, I don't want to *know* that log. Might yield to th' tempter, some day, an' throw you overboard. Then all I'd have to do would be to go down an' look for that log, take a soundin' with a pair o' pinchers for a lead an' line, an' live mis'able an' rich ever after. No, sir. You can't fool me into no such scrape at that. Figger out y'r *own* scheme o' markin' th' John Quincy Adams log."

And he put the little die back into his pocket with an expression on his face that showed that he had successfully resisted the machinations of the evil one for once.

"Now," he went on after a pause, "I'm goin' to keep Mr. Black so John busy in th' cabin figgerin' on some accounts this afternoon, an' I'm goin' to keep myself so Quincy busy aft here on deck resistin' temptation, an' I'm goin' to keep every man Jack o' the hull crew so Adams hard at work in one place or another, that if you want to sneak down there a few minutes to say your prayers or anythin', why, I guess you can do it without bein' disturbed at your devotions. If you're a-goin' to worship God with a hammer, though, I wouldn't make my prayers too John Quincy Adams loud, that's all."

Then the navigator went forward and ostentatiously took a bag of wooden belaying pins from the rail where it had been hanging ever since the voyage had begun. There was an old sailor in the

crew who had sailed with the Captain once before, and when he saw him take that bag down from the hook, he lifted up his hands and looked toward Heaven with an expression of exasperation and disgust. The Captain took it aft. He sat down again by Parton, and took the pins—there were about forty of them—lovingly in his hands. They showed the effects of some strange kind of ill-usage. They bore many knobs and bunches as if they had been much and roughly worn.

"It's the first time I've had to give the crew any tonic this v'yage," he said to Parton.

"What do you mean?" asked Parton.

"Why, I call this my tonic bag," answered the Captain. "See these pins? Well, I s'pose they're gettin' pretty well worn out. Eh? Guess I'll have to go to some lumber yard drug store, when I git into port, and git 'em to make me some new tonic. Couldn't make a v'yage without this bag. Men would mutiny sure. Never'd git to port."

Parton was still in the dark, but the Captain did not explain at once.

"I s'pose that nex' to th' number o' times th' Lord, or th' Devil, or whoever attends to th' prescription department o' th' Hell pharmacy, has mixed up doses to make me want to steal, he's mixed me up doses to make me want to murder. Yes, sir. By John, I s'pose I've wanted to murder 's many 's a hunderd men! Why, one time when I was so Quincy exasp'rated that I couldn't stand it no longer, I knelt down by th' side o' my berth one night an' I said to th' Lord, says I:

"'Oh, Lord!' says I, 'I don't know what

Heaven's goin' to be like,' says I, 'but I'm figgerin' out that you ain't got it finished yet,' I says.

"I calc'lated that way, because o' what th' Good Book says about th' Day o' Jedgment, an' that can't come till *everybody*'s dead. God's got plenty o' time, I figger. I bet *you*, by Adams, that them as thinks that they're goin' straight to th' Golden Gate 's soon 's they die 'll find that they've got to wait a consid'able time underground first. They can't git into Heaven till they've been jedged, an' they can't git jedged till the *Day* o' Jedgment. But I'm gettin' away from my prayer.

"'Oh, Lord,' says I, by John, 'if you hain't got Heaven planned yet, and 'll take a suggestion from an old fool of a sea-captain, let me tell you what to do,' says I. "'Twon't be no use,' I goes on—an' this is perfeckly truthful—to be puttin' old dead sea-captains into no Heaven that was planned for landsmen,' I says.

"An' it wouldn't. We git different notions out here to sea, an' by Quincy, we git *sot* in 'em!

"'Now,' says I to the Lord, says I, 'if you re'ly want to suit us fellers, an' I understand that that's what Heaven's a-goin' to be designed for to do for all men an' women, no matter what their jobs has been on earth, you want to fix us up a place a good deal diff'rent from the place that would be all right an' very enjoyable for some other folks—school girls, for instance.

"'Th' object of Heaven,' I says, 'as I understand it, Oh, Lord, is to make everybody perfec'ly happy. Now there's only one way in which you *could* make a dead sea-captain perfec'ly happy. That,' says I, 'is to fix it so 's 't he can kill one old sailor ev'ry

day,' says I, 'an' two a day for them old Captains as has been especial deservin' here on this Adams earth.'

"An' that's about right, Mr. Parton. The Lord's all mighty, an' it don't seem to me that it ought to be hard for him to figger out some way so 's 't we could do that up there without committin' no sin. An', by John Quincy Adams—how good it would make *me* feel!"

The Captain pulled out his great silver watch and peered at it closely. Then he devoted a minute or two to studying and mental arithmetic. He never set the watch while at sea, as do most seamen with each change of latitude, but elaborately calculated the actual time from that which was shown by the watch as prevailing at Boston, Massachusetts. It was laborious and somewhat slow, but he had a theory that if he kept changing the watch each day it would wear out sooner. And he naïvely announced that he had only had it thirty years.

"Well," he said, after he had studied the matter for some minutes, "I got to talkin' about old sailors in connection with this bag o' pins. You see they're pretty well wore out? This is how *that* happened. There ain't nobody on earth nor yet upon th' sea can grumble an make s' much trouble as an old sailor when he sets what he thinks is his mind to it. An' th' only way that he can be kep' *from* grumblin' is to keep him hard to work. You got to do it. Yes, sir. It's the only way.

"Well, on a sailin' vessel, in fine weather, there ain't re'lly enough work, after th' shore dirt's cleared away—it's awful dirty on land, ain't it?—an' th' ship painted till you've 'bout eat up th' profits of th' v'yage in white lead an' ile: there ain't no legit'mate

way o' keepin' th' sailors busy in fine weather after all these things is done. An' if you *don't* keep 'em busy, there's the Devil an' Tom Walker to pay right off, an' th' debt's about certain to be c'lected, too. So *I* keep 'em busy. I don't give none of 'em no time for sea-lawyerin'. No, sir, by John Quincy Adams, I don't. I give 'em these pins to paint."

"Well," said Parton, reflectively, "that doesn't take them long, does it?"

"Oh. 'bout a day, if I keep 'em hard at it, an' make 'em paint 'em mighty careful an' nice," said the Captain.

"But what do you do when that work is all done, if it only provides them with one day's labor?" said Parton.

"Why, I make 'em put th' pins where they'll dry over night—there's right smart o' turpentine in th' paint—an' when th' next fine weather day comes along an' they hain't got nothin' to do, I make 'em scrape the paint off. Then, you see, they can paint 'em over ag'in!"

And the Captain smiled triumphantly, as he expounded this solution of a great problem.

He pulled out his big watch and took another peep at it, going over the calculation again with great care, moving his lips as he multiplied, added and subtracted in order to get the exact time in their present longitude.

"You got them di'monds on you?" he asked, looking up.

Parton nodded.

"Well, the Mate's way up for'a'd. If I was you I'd go down an' git 'em out o' the belt into my pockets where I could git at 'em easy. Then I'll

git the Mate busy in th' cabin figgerin', an' I'll git the men aft workin' at somethin' or other, an' you c'n sneak down the hatch an' bury your treasure. Only, by John, don't you let me know in which log it's buried!"

Parton rose to do as had been suggested and the Captain rose also; but sank back with an exclamation, putting his hand to his head.

Parton approached him quickly and anxiously.

"What is it, Captain?" he asked with real solicitude and not a little anxiety in his voice.

"That's jest it," said the Captain. "That's jest it. By Quincy, I don't know *what* it is! That's why I'm so Adams anxious to have you git the things took care of in some way. I do' know but the Mate 'll be in command of th' *Lyddy* 'fore I can git her into the John Quincy Adams port!"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SIGNS OF BAD WEATHER

*It ain't allus the one with the patent locks that turns out to be the safest sea-chest.—*The Logbook of the Lydia.**

Besides the somewhat natural nervousness which Parton felt as he went to the cabin to remove the diamonds from his belt and stuff them into his pockets preparatory to hiding them from the possibly larcenous tendencies of the Mate, there was also distinct worry about Captain Burgee to make him feel uncomfortable. Even while he was in his little stateroom, removing the stones from the belt and carefully examining their tissue paper wrappings, a vision of the old sailor's pained, drawn face rose before him and troubled him. There had been something almost uncanny in its expression of sternly combatted agony. His half prediction that Black would be in command of the *Lydia Skolfeld* before she reached her Boston wharf was not a pleasant prophecy. Even aside from the fact that Parton had learned to feel a real affection for the old man and was greatly distressed to think that physical misfortune threatened him, he had cause for regret in the mere possibility that Black might be supreme upon the *Lydia*.

He put the plugs which the Captain had made for him into one of his outside pockets, together with some rumpled up bits of newspaper which he

thought that he might need for packing. Just as he had emerged from the cabin companionway, the Mate appeared at the head of it to go down, and Parton stood aside to let him pass.

As he walked aft the Captain tipped him one of his prodigious winks, and intimated to him in dumb show that everything was all right for him. As Parton turned and walked forward toward the open hatch, the Captain walked with him, so that the solitary excursion of the passenger should not seem strange to the man at the wheel. By the time they had reached the hatch they were hidden from him by masts and canvas, and the Captain had so distributed the other members of the crew that Parton could descend into the hold without being seen by any of them.

He climbed down the perpendicular iron ladder with some of the excitement which attends a man who is going on an adventurous expedition. He had under his pea jacket one of those small ship's lanterns which are used in such excursions at sea, and are protected against possible gases in the hold as miners' safety lamps are protected against the danger of igniting fire damp, by a fine wire netting over all apertures.

The work of secreting the jewels took only a few moments. There was a narrow gangway running aft between two piles of the timbers, closely braced and shored so as to hold them firm in case of heavy seas. Over these braces Parton clambered quickly until he reached the second pile of the timbers. He used his light very sparingly, only flashing it from beneath his jacket after he felt certain that he was in a position where it could not be seen even by a

person leaning over the hatchway and looking down.

The space between the second and the third piles of timbers was scarcely wider than was necessary for his cramped passage, and was greatly encumbered by bracing rods and beams; but it was this very narrowness which made him choose it. He selected the log which was to form his novel safety deposit box in a way which he thought of at that very moment and he laughed to himself as he decided on the method. At random he touched a log and, feeling of its smooth, square end, found the small test hole. Having fully investigated this hole with his fingers and found that it was in all respects suitable for his purpose, he did *not* take it; but took the third one from it, counting toward the outer planking of the ship.

He also had with him a bit of wire not far from four feet in length. This he thrust into the hole, finding its depth to be about three feet. He pushed his precious packages in, one by one, until they had all disappeared into the log. With a stick which formed a part of his equipment, he poked them in as far as he could, and then he gently hammered the plug which the Captain had whittled out for him after them. The old man had evidently calculated its size with great care, for it went in with just enough unwillingness to make Parton feel certain that it would take a definite effort to bring it out and that it could not be dislodged by any ordinary accidental circumstance.

Then there came the problem of marking the log for identification. First, he very carefully determined its location in the pile by count, and made elaborate notes about it in his memorandum book,

which, afterwards, he tucked into his pocket with much greater care than had ever been bestowed upon the little volume before during the whole of its existence. But he was not satisfied with this mere memorandum. Many things, he reflected, might happen to that. He might lose the book, for instance. To mark the log itself was, as the Captain had said, a most necessary precaution. Parton, in spite of the absorbed attention which he was giving to his task, smiled as he thought of the episode of the ship's die. He solved the problem by taking from his pocket his key ring, and selected a flat, steel key, with numerous eccentric notches along its edge. He held this against the end of the log, and hit it two or three smart blows with his little hammer, waiting before he struck, each time, until the ship was groaning with the strain of the sea, as all wooden vessels will. Then he flashed his light upon the log's end, and saw that there was a very distinct impression of the key there. He smiled a little as he saw it. The key had been the one with which he had opened the Safety Deposit box in London, the day on which he had taken the belt with its precious burden out of it. Thus, for the second time it became the guardian of his treasure. Flashing the light upon it, he saw that the impression was very clear and distinct—even more so than he had thought that it would be. Still he believed that no one would be likely to observe so small a blemish. He made assurance of this doubly sure by rubbing over the impression some of the earth which clung to the end of one of the other logs. All of the log-ends were more or less smeared with dried mud, and the presence of this particular soiled spot on this

particular log end could not possibly attract attention to it.

After he had completed his task, he examined its result with some care, and was well satisfied that he had hidden his jewels in such a way that the Mate would be unable to find them.

Luck—or the Captain—favored him, for no member of the crew was near at hand when he emerged from the hatch to the deck. As he passed them he noticed that the sea was rising, and a dash of salt water drenched him. Here again was good luck. If such things occurred often it would be necessary to batten down the hatches. Had it been necessary to do so before, it might have been difficult to arrange it so that he could have entered or emerged from the hold without making a great deal of trouble and attracting much attention. Farther aft he was amused to see that a number of the crew were squatted on the deck, disconsolately busy at taking the Captain's belaying pin tonic.

The weather, although it was freshening considerably, was still delightful. A smart breeze from almost dead astern drove the *Lydia* along spankingly, and made every inch of her square canvas pull, with bellies bulging toward America. The sun glittered prettily on the ever-moving sea, and Parton felt exhilarated and elated.

When he went below he found the Mate sitting at the cabin table, busy with some papers. He looked up rather surlily. Parton also sat down at the table after he had left his incumbrances in his little cabin, which he could easily do without being seen by the other man. Parton passed over the cigar box, and the Mate knocked off from the evidently distasteful

clerical work, and got up to bring some whiskey and water, which they drank together. Parton had planned to show the man that there was nothing especially valuable in the belt as soon as that should be really true. He hitched about in his chair as if he were uneasy, and finally said, laughing:

"Well, I fancy that I'll have to give it up after all. You were right about the wearing of that wet belt. Its wettings have made it stiff when it is dry, and it is getting to be a pretty uncomfortable article of clothing."

He unbuttoned one or two buttons of his trousers and, lifting up his shirt, loosened the buckle of the belt and pulled it from around him. While he rearranged his clothing, it lay there on the table, between him and the Mate, and the latter regarded it with evident curiosity.

"Did you ever see one like it, before?" asked Parton. "I am told that they are the invention of an American—as most ingenious things seem to be. At any rate, this was given to me by an American."

He did not add that the gift had been given in South Africa by one whom he had met in the wilderness during his search for diamonds. Parton passed it over to the Mate. The Mate fingered it with what seemed to Parton to be assumed carelessness, and said:

"No. I never did see one just like it. How does it work?"

Parton pulled it back to him and explained the plan, taking from it all its contents as he did so. There were some bank notes, and a letter or two. There was a little ring which his mother had given to him before he went out to the Cape,

and which the handle of his pick had worn through on the very day on which he had made his discovery of the diamond pocket or "chimney." The Mate looked somewhat eagerly, Parton thought, at the small pile of miscellaneous and not very impressive treasures, and carelessly fingered the empty leather belt, examining the plan of its construction with some curiosity. Again he glanced at the little pile on the table.

"So those are the treasures, are they, which made you so mighty careful of that belt!" he exclaimed with a somewhat strained and incredulous laugh.

The moment was a hard one for Parton to bear. If ever a man's hands itched to strike another, Parton's did then to strike Black as they faced each other across the table. But the mere fact that he had mustered courage to do as much as he had done made Parton believe that Black had finally made up his mind that he had been mistaken in identifying him as Parton. The impulse to straighten matters out in his mistaken mind was strong; but Parton knew that it was also foolish. In Africa, Black had had no possible way of retaliating. In America he might find a disconcerting way should he learn about the diamonds. It was without a doubt the course of ordinary sense to endure now, and, if any punishment was ever to be inflicted on the sailor, to save it for a future time.

Finally Black, with a half contemptuous gesture, tossed the belt back to him across the table, and Parton, his fingers trembling with wrath, placed in it again the things which he had taken out of it. His emotions were not enviable.

Just as he had buckled the belt around himself

again, and rearranged the waistband of his trousers, the Captain thrust his face through the skylight. He made some noise in doing so, and attracted the attention of both men. He did not speak or call to either of them; but there was a strange and frightening look about his face which made Parton start, almost in terror. The Captain's eyes were fixed on him, and the forefinger of one of his knotted hands beckoned to him to go on deck. Then the head withdrew, and Parton started toward the companion-way.

"You and the Captain appear to be mighty good friends," commented the Mate. "Guess he'll need all his friends after this voyage is ended. He won't be able to get cargoes after this, I'm afraid. The old man's queer sometimes, these days. It's lucky for him that he *owns* this old hooker. I don't believe he'd find many owners willing to trust him with their ships."

Parton hurried away and the Mate turned back to the papers on the table.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE "LYDIA" CHANGES COMMANDERS

Sickness don't hail an' ask you if you're busy. It jest comes aboard an' makes itself to home.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

As Parton reached the deck, the Captain looked at him with an expression in which were shown both physical pain and a desperate resolve to hide as completely as possible all signs of suffering.

"I ain't a-feelin' *very* well," he admitted, in reply to Parton's startled inquiries. "I ain't a-feelin' so John Quincy Adams well as I might. That's why I asked you to come on deck." He hesitated as he fingered a coil of line and some mechanical contrivance which he held loosely in his hand. "That was *one* reason," he said, slowly, but then, evidently getting better as he talked, he added as if in extenuation of it, "but principally I wanted for to have you see th' patent log a-workin'. I thought mebbe you'd be willin' to tear yourself away from your friend in there long enough to come aft with me." Now he grinned, but there was an evident strain in it, although that and a wave of the hand stopped any tendency toward sympathetic words which Parton may have felt. This evidently relieved the old man, for again he waved his hand with an effort to make the motion seem as if it were careless, but Parton noticed that it trembled as it made the gesture.

"Yes," the Captain continued, "I wanted you should see how 'tis that I can measure up th' *Lyddy's* actual speed." He was plainly embarrassed by the little show of weakness which he had given, and now made an effort to be even more than usually light-hearted as a penance for the moment when tragic apprehension had been plainly evidenced on his face. Parton said nothing, but he looked at him keenly, and the old man said again, with an almost pitiful appeal in his eyes for complete belief as he looked up from his seat upon the stanchion, "Yes, sir, I wouldn't a-been in no particular hurry for you to come on deck if I hadn't thought you might be interested in seein' how the John thing works."

Now he handed the contrivance which he had in his hand to Parton. It looked like a small brass model of the propeller of a ship with, above it, a brass cylinder with a curved glass plate set into it, beneath which was a figured dial with a hand like that of a watch. Parton took this and examined it curiously. He did not for a moment believe that the Captain's dramatically expressed desire to have him come on deck had been born of a desire to have him watch its operation, but he respected his evident wish to make light of what had happened, and made no comment.

But for some time after this the Captain made no move toward going further with the test of the *Lydia's* speed; but sat in silence on the stanchion.

"Yes, sir," he said finally, rousing with what seemed to be an effort, "I wanted to have you see the patent log work. It ought to interest you, bein' as it was invented by an Englishman, an' a 'Sir,' at that. We'll try it in a minute."

He paused again. When he went on there was a smile about his lips—that pleasant, reminiscent smile which Parton had learned to know meant that he was thinking of the past.

"I had an old aunt back in New Hampshire, when I was consid'able younger than I be now," he said, "who, one time when I had jest finished a long v'yage and was layin' down to Boston—it was some time afore I was married—ast me down to her place to eat Thanksgivin' dinner. I was awful lonesome, somehow, when her letter come, an' so, although I didn't have no business to take th' time nor spend th' money, I started out an' went. Took me full half a day to git up there into th' mountains; but I was glad enough to see my old Aunt Hannah to make it worth it. I didn't have no other relatives livin' at th' time.

"She hadn't never seen th' ocean, an' was mighty interested in ever'thin' I had to tell about it. She ast me how fast my ship could sail, an' I told her that she could make about twelve knot under th' best conditions. Then I had to tell her that a knot was a marine mile, an' that a marine mile was about an eighth longer than a land mile. It puzzled her some, but by John, she come up smilin'.

"'But, Obed,' she says, 'how can you measure off them knots an' tell how fast you travel 'em when you're out to sea? Th' Bible speaks about th' ocean as a trackless waste,' she says, 'an' I s'pose that if it's trackless, it is, similar, without no mile-posts. An' course, they ain't no *land* marks out there on th' *water*. They wouldn't know where to put th' mile-posts up, anyway, an' if they *did* put 'em up, I s'pose they wouldn't stay jest still right where they put 'em.

I reckon that they'd float around some. An' if they did put 'em up an' if they stayed where they belonged, you might miss 'em like enough, 'cause they ain't no roads out to sea, an' if you should happen to be sailin' cross lots you might miss 'em easy. How can you tell?' she asks.

"'Why,' I says, 'Aunt M'riar, we measure th' speed by a-heavin' of th' log.' It never occurred to me that she wouldn't understand what I meant by that. 'Then,' I says, goin' on, 'all we have to do is to multiply th' number o' knots for one hour by th' number of hours we keep a-goin', an' there we have how fur we've gone. Don't you see?' says I. 'Then we look at th' compass to see what direction she's been goin' in, an' then we put two an' two together, an' we find out where we be, an' prick it off on th' chart,' I says. 'That's what we call "dead reck'nin",' I added.

"'Well, what for a log have *you* got, Obed, for to heave?' asks Aunt M'riar.

"It never occurred to me, as I have said, that she wouldn't know what a log was on shipboard, an' I said that I had a pretty good one, but that it wa'n't the best, and that I'd have to git a new one 'fore long.

"'How big's a log, Obed?' she asts.

"'Oh, the size don't make no diff'rence,' I says. 'If it's a good instrument the size don't make no difference.'

"'How much 'll you have to pay for one, Obed?' she asks, smilin' jest the prettiest smile they was in all New England. It does me good to think o' that smile of Aunt M'riar's now. It was *sweet*.

"'Well, now,' I says, 'they cost consid'able. If

it hadn't been for their costin' so much,' I says, 'I should 'a' had a new one long ago.'

"Well, she didn't say no more about it, an' I forgot it 'fore I went back to Boston where th' *Lyddy* was in dock bein' outfitted for a round the Horner. I'd been workin' there, gittin' cargo stowed an' such things for about three, four days, when there comes down to th' dock one o' them great timber trucks such as you don't often see in cities, but 'll find wher- ever they're a-doin' any loggin' all right. It was jest two big pair o' wheels, fastened to diff'rent places on a great timber. The timber held 'em together, the way th' reach of a wagon joins the ax'es.

"'Is Cap'n Obed Burgee on board?' says the feller that was a-drivin' of the six horses that had been haulin' it. He'd left 'em down to th' end of the dock, an' come walkin' to th' ship's side on foot.

"'Yes,' says I, 'I reckon I'm Cap'n Obed Burgee,' says I.

"'Well,' says he, 'I got a big timber out here for you, an' if you'll tell me where you want me to haul it to, I'll haul it there,' says he, 'an' be glad to git rid of it. I wouldn't und'take ag'in to haul such a long piece o' timber as that through th' crooked streets o' Boston,' he says, 'not if you'd give it to me. There ain't hardly a straight place in this town as long as that timber is,' says he, 'an' I've had to figger mighty close for to git it down to you without destroyin' none of th' buildin's. I was afraid,' says he, 'that I'd have to bend it in order to git it through some o' th' snaky places,' he says.

"Well, I went out an' looked at th' timber, an' I knew that there wasn't no such stick o' wood due to me. By John! It would a' made a mast for a man-o'-war!

"'Well,' I says, 'I'm sorry,' I says, 'but I guess you'll have to wriggle it some more through th' crooked streets o' Boston,' I says, "'cause it ain't for me,' I says.

"'Hell!' says he. 'Ain't it?'

"And I thought he was jest a-goin' to sit down there an' sob in sorrer.

"'No,' says I, 'it ain't. An' if anybody was Quincy fool enough to try to ship such an Adams long chunk o' cargo as that by th' *Lyddy Skolfeld*, I says, 'I couldn't do nothin' with it. I couldn't stow it below decks, 'cause it's longer than the ship is; an' if I stowed it on deck, it 'ld stick out so fur, stem an' stern, fore an' aft, that I'd like enough sweep most o' th' other vessels off th' North Atlantic Ocean every time I tacked my Adams ship,' I says.

"'Ain't for you,' he says, bracin' up an' gittin' kind of scornful an' skeptical-like. 'Look at this direction that's tacked onto it,' he says, 'an' then tell me it ain't for you. Guess I can read,' he says.

"Well, I went out an' looked at th' label that was onto th' John Quincy Adams thing, an' there it was, all right, addressed to 'Cap'n Obed Burgee, Master o' th' barkentine *Lyddy Skolfeld*.'

"Jest then th' postman come along, an' he handed me a letter from my dear old aunt. I opened it an' read it, then an' there. In it she said, 's far 's I can remember:

"'Dear Obed,' she had wrote, 'You said you'd got to have a new log, an' so I'm a-sendin' one to you. It's the best one there was to be cut in our wood lot on th' hill. I've been a-kind of savin' it, hatin' to have it cut down, for quite a number of years. I was kind of fond of that tree. But when

I heard you say that you had got to have a new log in order to tell correct how fast your ship was goin', I made up my mind that it was jest selfish for me to keep th' old tree standin' where it wa'n't no good to nobody but jest for me to look at. So the day you left I had it cut down, an' am a-sendin' it to you, freight paid.

"I hope, Obed," th' letter went on, "that th' surgin' seas that this log measures for you will allus treat you gentle, an' that when you see it floatin' on their surface you'll allus think of old Aunt M'riar. I'll either be down here in New Hampshire or up there in Heaven, I hope, an' my prayers will allus be for you."

"I could 'a cried," said the Captain. "An' I got out all hands and I had 'em help th' feller that had brought th' log down to th' dock to unload it, an' I give him a dollar. Poor old aunt had paid all th' charges, not wishin' to make me any expense. I had that log sawed up and made into fine match boards an' I jest re-boarded the hull cabin of th' *Lyddy* with it, so's I c'l'd tell her if I ever saw her ag'in, that th' log was allus on board my ship an' addin' greatly to my comfort an' my pleasure. But I didn't never see her ag'in. Before I had ended th' v'yage that I started a day or two later, she had begun one that took her to her everlastin' harbor."

Parton would have said something after the Captain had finished his story, for he was both amused and touched by his tale about the simple, loving, ignorant old New England woman. But he was interrupted by a return of that strange look to the Captain's face which had been on it when he had looked through the cabin skylight. Indeed, there was more

than the look to disturb him. The Captain lurched forward toward him—they were at the after rail—and Parton put his arms out barely in time to prevent him from falling to the deck. This time there was no offer on the Captain's part to belittle his condition. He grasped the young man's arms at first, and then went close to the rail and gripped it with both hands. Again and again he passed his hands across his upper face, always letting the fingers linger in a hard pressure just above the right eye.

"By John Quincy Adams!" he said, with a strange, wandering look in his eyes, "I dunno's it'll be very long 'fore I c'n go to my Aunt an' tell her all about it myself! Guess she won't have to be long dependin' on her far sight in order to see that I've used her log in beautifyin' of th' *Lyddy!* By John Quincy Adams—that's the funniest feelin'!"

"What is it, Captain?" asked Parton, anxiously.

"Oh, I guess it ain't much," said the Captain. "Seems like a kind of concentrated an' glorified essence o' some o' th' worst phases of seasickness, only it's in my head—not in my stummick. You know how dizzy you was when you was seasick? Well multiply that by ten an' carry one, an' you've got about what I was just now. But it don't last long. Still, I'm glad them di'monds of yours is hid. Did you git 'em put away all right?"

"Yes," said Parton, still regarding him anxiously. "Shall I tell you where they are?"

"Not if I was a-dyin' for the need o' news," said the Captain. "They're hid. That's all I want to know. I want 'em to be jest as well hid from me as from anybody else."

He gradually recovered from his attack of dizziness, and sat down on a coil of rope.

"I didn't re'lly git you back here to tell you about my poor aunt," he said. "I reckon you know that. I got you back here to have you tell me what you've just told me, and I tell you that it takes a weight off my mind to hear you say it. Now 't you've got 'em hid, you're feelin' pretty com'f'able yourself, ain't you?"

"Very," said Parton.

The Captain grinned weakly.

"That's good," said he. "I'm allus glad to have the folks on my ship feel comf'table."

Parton was about to say something in reply, when he was again alarmed by a quick change in the expression of the Captain's face. Again the old man's hand went, with that wavering, bewildered movement up to his forehead, where he gently rubbed the skin on the right side. The strange look of indefinite mental worry which accompanied the rubbing of his forehead was, it seemed to Parton, even more acute than it had been on either of the other occasions. Parton did not for a moment suspect the nature of the very serious trouble of which the gesture was prophetic; but he was full of sympathy for the honest man who showed distress by means of it.

But the Captain turned toward him after a few moments with a forced smile on his lips, and then let his eyes slowly wander out over the ship's foaming wake, which stretched far astern across the blue surface of the waters.

"She's makin' pretty good headway," he said, finally. "Guess I'll try the patent log after all. Didn't re'lly intend to when I got you aft here—just

used it as an excuse for gettin' you away from that cabin, so'st I could talk to you without havin' th' mate mebbe overhear all that we was a-sayin'."

The Captain threw the little brass propeller out into the water and made the other end of the line fast to the ship. He let the slack of the rope slip slowly through his fingers, and for a long time Parton could see the blades of the toy propeller flashing in the sunlight at the surface of the water. Then they sunk far enough so that they were no longer visible, but by placing his fingers on the line just beyond the ship's rail, over which it was drawn taut, he could feel the vibration of their whirling.

"It feels like a magnified troll-fishing line," said Parton, "with a spoon hook on the end big enough for whales."

"Yes," said the Captain. "Don't it? That's jest what it *does* feel like."

He stood leaning on the rail with his gaze fixed on the wake of the vessel, which stretched away a silvery line, reaching to the horizon.

"I don't believe I'll be watchin' th' footprints of th' *Lyddy* for many more v'yages," he said, finally. "Ain't they dainty? 'D you ever see a school miss that left a prettier markin' through th' mornin' grass than th' *Lyddy* leaves here on th' sea? But I shan't watch 'em for many more v'yages. Not many more. Not—many—more."

There was a mournful cadence in the old man's voice that touched Parton deeply.

"Nonsense, Captain," he said, "you're hale and hearty enough to take her across for many a voyage yet. I wouldn't wonder if you outsailed her, and she seems to be a pretty staunch ship, too."

"No," said the Captain, "and that was why I was so anxious to have you git them stones hid some'rs. I ain't a-goin' to last *this* v'yage out. I tell you, Mr. Parton—" and here the Captain turned toward the young Englishman and put his hand on his shoulder, looking mournfully into his eyes as he did so—"I tell you, Mr. Parton, that I ain't goin' to last *this* v'yage out—sure!"

Parton gazed at him in astonishment.

"I'd know whether I'm goin' to die or not," the old man went on, after having turned back to the rail and resumed his contemplation of the *Lydia's* wake, "but I *do* know that somethin' or other is a-happenin' to my head. Sure as John Quincy Adams was President of the United States, somethin's a-happenin' on th' inside o' my head. Inside o' my head. Way inside my head. Somethin's a-happenin' in there."

When he turned back and once more looked at Parton that great change had come into his face again. The skin seemed to have pulled away from his eyes, and they looked unnaturally large. His features were strained and drawn. His lips were stretched back from his teeth, and these showed in double and painfully grinning rows.

"B' John Quincy Adams," said the Captain slowly. "B' John—Quincy—Adams, it's—it's—it's *come!*"

He reached out his arms to Parton, who grasped at them hurriedly, holding out his own to him; but the old man slid between them and down to the deck before Parton could catch him. If there had been anything to get hold of, he might have been saved from actually falling prostrate; but there seemed to be nothing. Every ounce of solidity, of firmness,

of power of resistance, had gone from him, and his body was, in Parton's grasp, like some soft, flabby, elusive, half liquid thing. It slipped through his fingers like jelly.

The Captain's eyes were closed now, as Parton tried to lift him. His face had become a ghastly ashen color. Only his lips moved, and from between them came softly in constant repetition:

"B' John Quincy Adams! B' John Quincy Adams! B' John Quincy Adams!"

Parton raised him and carried him up the three steps which led to the little wheel deck of the ship. He had not thought to call for help, and the Captain's limp body lay a dead weight in his arms. The ship was bowing slowly and gracefully to the long Atlantic swells, and he staggered under his burden. A man was standing at the wheel, but no one else was within sight. Parton called to him, and he turned to see what was wanted. He gave one glance at Parton and his burden and set up a shout for help.

"I'll lash the wheel," he said, but before he had done this two or three sailors came running and took the Captain out of Parton's arms. Nearly the entire watch had assembled before anyone called the mate. A sailor roused him from a sound sleep in the cabin, and he appeared at the top of the companionway in a towering rage and swearing vigorously.

Parton explained what had happened to the old man as well as he could—he by no means understood it himself—and the mate helped him to take the Captain downstairs, while one of the sailors followed with his cap, which had fallen off and which had been

found lying on the deck near to the place where they had been standing when the attack had come.

They laid him in his berth, and Parton started to take off his clothes so that he might rest more easily. For a moment the mate did not interfere. Then he thrust Parton roughly aside and glanced at him wickedly.

"Here, now, none o' that," said he. "I ain't goin' to have no *thieves* overhaulin' the Captain's clothes. Go on deck, sir, an' don't come back till I send for you. *I'm* in command of this ship now!"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A PROPOSITION AND ITS ANSWER

One bully with officer's buttons on his coat can make a hull ship seem crowded.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

For a moment after the mate gave this surly order, Parton stood looking at him with astonishment and fury in his face, and fists involuntarily clenched. But sober second thought told him that resistance would be worse than useless. He knew enough about the rules governing life on shipboard to understand that the command which the mate succeeded to in case of the Captain's incapacity was legally as complete as that of the Captain himself. He turned slowly and went to the deck without a word. As he climbed the companionway stairs there was a look upon his face which was not nice to see and there was a frenzy in his mind which was not good to feel. The last sound that he heard as he passed out of ear-shot was the Captain's voice saying, slowly:

“B' John Quincy Ad—! B' John Quincy Ad—!
B' John Quincy Ad—!”

He wondered why he did not finish out the word.

The whole ship quickly showed signs of demoralization. Little work was done on board for the next hour or two, and during the whole of this time, as there was no change in wind or weather, and nothing especially demanding his presence on the deck, the

mate stayed below in the cabin with the Captain. Once or twice he appeared at the companionway entrance and called one of the men to him to give some trivial order; but there was no change in the main details of the situation. Finally Parton's anxiety about the Captain induced him to venture below to see him, but he was roughly ordered out.

"Bear in mind this, Mr.—Mr. *Carter*," said Black, unpleasantly, "that while *I* am in command of this vessel you will do what *I* say, or you will be in trouble. If *I* had been myself back there in the Channel, you wouldn't be here now. You would have gone ashore with the man who came out to get you. It was a slick game that you worked on the poor old Captain here and that Police Inspector; but you couldn't have worked it on *me* if *I* had been myself. You can't work *any* game on me. Remember that! You can't work *any* game on me! You'll stay on deck where you belong, if I tell you to, and if you come down again to bother this sick man here, I'll have you put in irons, by God! and now you understand how *we* stand!"

Parton was astounded by this tirade; but he reflected that Black's courage had doubtless been increased by his succession to command. He could now call on every man aboard the ship to help him in case of trouble with the passenger. Parton went aft and sat where he had spent many a pleasant hour with the Captain and mused, dismally. The man at the wheel and almost all the others on the watch, looked at him curiously, and were careful not to talk with him; but he thought that he could see signs now and then that they were not pleased by the manner in which the mate was treating him. While he had not espe-

cially become a favorite with the crew, he had certainly done nothing to make the men dislike him, and the Captain's friendship for him had made them think well of him, for Captain Burgee, despite the fact that he had made his sailors keep the ship in what they thought was unnecessarily spick and span shape, was popular among his crew.

Parton's afternoon on deck was anything but pleasant. His thoughts were not cheerful, and, about sunset, a light rain began to fall. This forced things to an issue in his mind. The Captain had lent to him a vast yellow oilskin coat which smelled horribly of fish. It was hanging in his berth. He made up his mind that he would get that coat or bring matters to a final crisis then and there. He was keyed up to a pitch which would have carried him to any length of assault and battery upon the new commander of the ship when he went below to get the coat. But, greatly to his surprise, the Mate made no objection. He met Parton with as near a pleasant smile as his face was capable of, and told him, with his finger on his lips, that the Captain was asleep. After Parton had taken what he wanted from his berth, the mate went with him to the deck. Parton tried to avoid his company by going to the after rail; but the mate walked with him and leaned against it as if they were the best of friends. He was evidently somewhat ill at ease. Finally he spoke.

"I'm sorry that I spoke so to you to-day," he said, awkwardly, "but I was so upset by the Captain's illness that I didn't quite realize what I was doing or saying. It's a big responsibility to have the command of another man's ship shoved on to your shoulders out to sea, and—it made me nervous. Not

that I'm afraid that I can't take the old hooker into port all right—I can do that, I guess, about as well as he could; but it—it ain't pleasant. I—I hope you'll excuse me, Mr.—Carter."

Parton said nothing for a moment. He did not like the look in the man's face, which was, if possible, a little more disagreeable in its apology than it had been in its aggression, and he did not like the hesitation before the pronunciation of the assumed name. Still his common-sense told him that it would be better to get along without an open rupture if he could.

"I don't blame you for feeling sore about it," added the mate before Parton spoke at all, but you'll admit that things was a little more than usual worrying, and that, perhaps, I had an excuse for being flustered."

"Oh, I fancy that it will be all right," said Parton, with no cordiality in his voice, but merely as if he were accepting a disagreeable but necessary situation as well as he could be expected to. "I presume that we shall be able to get along until we get into port without coming to blows."

It was evidently the mate's desire to take this remark as if it were jocularly meant, for he smiled as he said:

"I guess so. Of course you will keep your own quarters."

Then he held out his hand.

"Shall we shake and call by-gones by-gones?" he said.

Parton shook hands with him and said that he supposed they might as well. He could not quite make the situation out; but decided that the man

had taken advantage of his time on deck to search the berth and, finding nothing, had made up his mind that he had better withdraw his prohibition in the hope that, permitted to freely enter the cabin, Parton might, in some unguarded moment, reveal the hiding-place of the valuables which he believed he had, and which he had overheard talk about in that unguarded conversation. Parton said nothing more about the disagreeable events of the afternoon. He was anxious to change the subject, naturally, and he was anxious to talk about the Captain.

"How is he now?" asked Parton.

"Just about the same," said the mate. "There don't seem to be much change. It's the strangest thing I ever heard of. When we first got him down here he was busy with that fancy oath of his, you know, only, apparently, he couldn't remember all of it. All he could say was, 'By John Quincy Ad—.' He couldn't seem to get the 'ams.' Well, he kept saying that over and over, until he went back into the sleep he's in now, only, every once in an hour or two he'd lose a syllable. Finally he got it down to plain 'By John—' That was the last he said before he went to sleep."

"Has he any fever?" asked Parton. "I don't know very much about illness; but I know that fever is a bad sign."

"You can see him if you like, and try if you can tell. I don't know *anything* about such things."

That the mate was badly frightened was now plain enough. It was shown by the color of his face and his nervousness. Parton was now certain that he had begun to reflect upon the course he had taken, and to wonder if, when the ship reached port, there

might not be something about it likely to be regarded unfavorably by the courts. While a vessel is at sea her officers are supreme in her command, but that by no means absolves them from being held responsible, after they have reached port.

Parton went to the Captain's bunk and pulled back the curtains. The old seaman's face showed that strange pallor which is so uncanny in the sickened countenances of men who have been, in health, deeply bronzed by sun and weather. Parton had seen that same deathlike look on the faces of men in South Africa, and it made him shudder. The eyes were not wholly closed, but only a strip of yellowish white showed. There was none of the humanizing incursion of the round disc of the pupils to soften their appearance and make them less ghastly to look upon. The arms were spread straight along the sides of the body outside of the coverlet, with the fingers wide apart and rigid. The pulse ran slowly and unsteadily at, as nearly as Parton could count with his watch in his hand, about 60. The old man's lips continually moved, notwithstanding the apparent stupor in which he lay, and Parton, stooping over, could distinguish above the creaking of the *Lyddy*'s timbers and the soft swish of the waters along her sides the syllables, muttered over and over again:

"B' John Quin—! B' John Quin—! B' John Quin—!"

He bathed the old man's hands and arms in hot water and gave him whiskey, although it was difficult to make him take it. When the mate admitted that nothing had been done before, Parton had to shut his lips tight in order to prevent himself from giving vent to vehement reproach. Not long after-

wards Parton looked up from the Captain's side to find that the mate had gone on deck. A few moments after this he went to his own berth. What he had suspected had occurred. Indeed, the berth had been more thoroughly overhauled than he had supposed even the mate would dare. The security which the man had felt in this outrage was shown by the fact that he had not even attempted to rearrange the bed so that traces of his trespass would be hidden.

Several days passed after this with small change in the situation, except for a brief period of apparent consciousness for the Captain on the second day after the stroke, when he seemed to be struggling in vain to tell Parton something. The mate was uniformly friendly in a strained and watchful manner. But when he called Parton by the name of "Carter," there was always on his face a little sneer as if he knew the name to be a false one, and used it merely to save the bother of arguing the matter.

The Captain's vocabulary lost one syllable at a time, until he lay in his bunk all day and a good part of the night, saying over and over again with a ceaseless monotony, terribly depressing:

"By—, By—, By—, By—"

Parton realized that he had been affected in no ordinary way and talked the case over with the mate speculatively. He assumed that the affair was due to some lesion in the brain, and that the preceding pains and dizzinesses had been premonitory symptoms. If the old man had been stricken with an ordinary illness, no matter how severe, Parton would have felt much less distressed, for he could at least have applied some of those simple remedies which he had learned of in his own ex-

perience, or which were in the primitive knowledge of the sailors; but this affliction was so unusual that it was completely beyond even the guesses of the wisest of the men on board. There was something almost uncanny about it. The sailors talked of it quietly among themselves, and one of them diffused a certain indefinite superstitious dread among the others by making the sign of the cross each time he passed the cabin companionway, which so demoralized the others that afterwards the mate was prone to keep them forward and force this one, by threats, to stop his terrifying gabble.

Neither Parton nor the mate had the least idea whether or not the illness would terminate fatally. So far as they could tell there was no change of real importance from day to day. Parton had hoped that there might be some way of getting medical assistance for the old man from a passing steamer—there were few days when one or more were not sighted—but the mate assured him that the big ships would not stop for such a purpose, and that the smaller vessels would be certain to have no medical man on board.

It was just after a conversation on this subject that the mate really showed his hand. He was with Parton in the cabin. For several days Parton had thought that he showed signs that in his new freedom as commander of the ship he had been indulging himself rather freely in the Captain's liquors, and this day, while he was not definitely drunk, he was unquestionably somewhat affected by intoxicants.

"Now see here, Mr.—Mr.—Carter," he said, with his unpleasant grin, "I think you and I had better come to an understanding. Of course when the—

when the old man was all right, you didn't have to take me into account; but now, you've *got* to. I *was* pretty drunk when I heard you talking about it; and I didn't hear it all very clearly, but I know well enough that you made a deal with the old man to put you ashore in the States because you were afraid of the police in England! You've got to come down! You've got to come down hard! You can do it, too, without losing anything, for the Captain won't be in shape to force a divvy. I think the old man's done for."

Parton was too angry to at all consider the policy of what he was about to do. He wanted to get away safely with the stones until such time as he could feel certain that he could so fairly present his case that the courts would do justice to him in his fight against MacFarren; but he risked this unhesitatingly, well knowing that he risked it, in his anger at the charge which Black had made against the Captain and at his outrageous proposal of a division of the spoils. The man took it for granted that Parton was a criminal and that, in order to preserve himself, he would consent to admitting a partner into his crime. All caution went out of Parton with the growth of indignation. He moved a step nearer to the mate, and, as he advanced, he stared him very steadily in the eyes, and, after the man had lowered his, he glared straight at the veinous lids which hid them.

"Before we discuss that matter," said Parton, "there are some other things I want to talk to you about. I want to tell you that you are a dog. That is one of the things. You are an unspeakable cur, and you know that you are a cur. The Captain knew that you were scum and told me he was sorry that he

had to ship you. So far as making any combination with you is concerned, I would see you in Hell and frizzle there myself before I would even talk to you about it. You are a common blackguard and a coward—too much of one even to resent what I have said to you, although by one of the Lord's mistakes you're in command here and could call the crew to help you."

The mate had leaned back against the table, but, as Parton paused, he started forward with his fists clenched. Whether at that moment he recognized in Parton the man who had undone him at the Cape, Parton never knew, but, at any rate, he did not advance far. He paused. The fingers, which had been tightly closed in great knots, relaxed slowly; the face which had been tense and drawn by passion slowly changed its expression to one not admirable but not defiant; the voice, which had been harsh and overbearing became propitiatory. He tried to cover his retreat with a complaint, but it was plain that he was as great a coward on the *Lydia Skolfeld* as he had been at the African mine.

"Well," said he, "there's no use of raising a row over it. What I ask of you is reasonable, and you ought to be damn glad that I *am* reasonable." Parton saw that he had not been recognized as Parton yet. The mate went on, growing bolder, "Perhaps I haven't put what I wanted to say very well; but you know that I am a rough man, and very likely I spoke roughly. There's no reason for you to fly at me like that. I suppose that we fellows who spend our lives at sea do get a bit rough in our talk."

"As I remember what I have said," said Parton, not raising his voice at all, but still with that steely

glitter in his eyes, "the rough language was all mine. As it is evident that you did not understand me, I will repeat it as well as I can. I told you that you were a cur, and that you knew that you were a cur, and that the Captain knew and told me that you were a cur. You are a coward, too. You are not only a cur and a coward but you are a thief. I know your past record, and I know that since I have been on this ship you have ransacked my berth more than once because you thought that I had hidden something valuable in it. But you haven't found it, and you won't find it. As far as your proposition is concerned, I send it to Hell and you along with it."

After this extraordinary speech, Parton, who was, perhaps, as much surprised by it as was the mate, leaned quietly upon the table and looked steadily at the man.

For an instant Black paused, as if dazed by his temerity. Then he clenched his fists and started forward with the look of a devil on his face.

"You—you—you!" he began, almost inarticulate from rage. But that was all he said, and again the clenched fists loosened. His courage all went when that strange glitter came again into Parton's eyes, blazing from a face whose muscles were set with a queer, iron-like rigidity. Parton was quite unaware of the terrifying aspect which anger placed upon his face; but he saw that something was breaking down the mate's nerve, and he thought it was South African memory. As a matter of fact, however, Black's memory still stopped short of that. The man remembered something in his face; but it only puzzled him, and he was even more frightened than he was

puzzled. He backed away slowly and went out of the cabin with no more words.

But even his departure from the cabin did not cause a change in the waiting, expectant attitude of Par-ton's body. For fully a minute afterwards he stood there by the table, with his body swinging to every motion of the ship, but, having in its lines a look of readiness to spring and strike and crush; and for as long a time the eyes still glittered with that metallic glare set in what might have been a wooden face so far as any softening of its expression indicated to the contrary.

Then he went on deck, and, for an hour, he paced the ship from end to end with no more sign that he dreaded the mate or anything that he might do than that he saw fair women and heard wit passing.

As the afternoon waned, he went below again. The mate was in the cabin and was smoking. Par-ton paid no heed to his surly nod, but, going to the opposite side of the cabin table, quietly reached across it and took the cigar from between the of-ficer's teeth and tossed it through the porthole.

"You will not smoke in the cabin, Mr. Black," he said, briefly and calmly. "I shall not either. I fancy that the Captain will want all the pure air that he can get. If to-morrow is a fine day, I shall have him taken to the deck, where the breeze may freshen him up a bit."

The mate said absolutely nothing. For a moment he sat at the table, breathing so heavily that the hissing of the air between his teeth and lips sounded louder than the Captain's labored respirations. Then he rose and went up the companionway stairs and out upon the deck.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE CRISIS

A good lickin' is th' only text that some men can understand a sermon from.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

From this time on, of course there could be no mistake about the relations between the two men. His open defiance of the mate had been a great relief to Parton. What Parton wanted of the men he ordered them without the least hesitation to do—and they did it. On the first day that he told a sailor to get something for him, the man looked at him with the beginning of an almost incredulous smile; but he neither hesitated nor smiled any more after he had really seen his face. It cannot, indeed, be said with exact truth that the new situation was wholly without a certain left-handed enjoyment for Parton. Men of strong determination really get pleasure out of an emergency which brings the trait into use, and so he found some satisfaction in matters as they were. He occasionally thought, when he was going matters over in his mind, that he had acted something very like a coward's part in his flight from London; but he got comfort from reflecting that that flight had not been from any individual or from any danger which mere pluck could have met and conquered. Now, when he had a definite enemy to fight, in the person of the mate, and the wrong that he resented was concrete; when

he felt that he must match wit against wit, muscle against muscle, courage against courage, he felt almost elated by the struggle. The mate was wholly his inferior, mentally and physically. He treated him as if he had not ever dared to dream himself anything else. He spoke to him when they met upon the deck, but he spoke calmly and indifferently, as one might speak to a servant deserving of courtesy and no more. That the mate felt it and was infuriated he could not doubt. He showed the strain of his position every day a bit more plainly, and he made the great mistake of drinking in an effort to overcome it; that helped to lose for him the men's respect. That the entire crew knew that something had happened between their accidental commander and Parton was very evident; and that they recognized that Parton had won a victory of some sort could not be doubted for a moment.

Parton took complete charge of the sick man. Once or twice the mate gave orders concerning him which Parton quickly countermanded—and the *men obeyed him*. After that the mate interfered not at all with him, and rarely showed enough interest in the old man's condition to make him even inquire about it.

The voyage was more than half completed. It had not been rapid, but it had been generally pleasant. The vessel was well to the southward of the course taken by the fast steamers, partly because of the effect of the prevailing winds and partly because the Captain had ever said that he preferred the longer course and good chances of fair weather to the shorter course and the practical certainty of delay through fogs.

"If things keep on like this, sir," a sailor said one day to Parton, "we shall be in port in a week at the outside, and we might make it in less."

Parton's heart beat high at the prospect. Just how the pleasant pictures which his fancy painted of the days to come on land were to be taken from the gallery of Hope and hung within the gallery of actuality he did not know and could not plan; but the memory of those last moments in the cab with Norah came very pleasantly to him. He took from his pocket many times a day the two souvenirs of her which he kept with him constantly—the letter which she had taken in to MacFarren's dinner table and the advertisement from the *Times*. They comforted him and gave him confidence. Indeed, the trouble with the mate had helped to better Parton's mental state, which, since the Captain's illness began had not been too pleasant. He reflected that many difficulties strewed the path which led to Norah; but he could find in his mind, now, no doubt whatever that they would be overcome and that he would find her at the path's end—find her waiting for him.

It was from such pleasing reflections as these that he turned to go below one morning. His attendance on the Captain had been almost all that the old man had had—the mate gave him none, and while the sailors unquestionably felt a desire to look after him there was also the feeling among them that the mate would resent it if they did, and so they kept away from him unless ordered to do something for him by either Parton or the mate—and such orders from the latter were infrequent.

When Parton entered the cabin he thought that there was no one there except the Captain. His

presence was at once made manifest by that ceaselessly reiterated "John—John—John—John—John," which came from his lips as regularly as the ticking of a clock. It was all that the old man had left of the queer expletive phrase which had been his only emphasis of language when in health. Parton went to his berth and leaned over him. He had made no effort to be especially quiet in his entry into the cabin; but, as a matter of fact, he had made no noise so loud that it was not overcome by the gentle swishing of the water along the sides of the vessel and the monotonous creaking of the timbers which every wooden ship gives forth when at sea, and which to those who love to voyage becomes a pleasant sound. For a moment Parton bent over the sick man. Then a sound, louder than any that had before reached his ears, came to him. It was the half-suppressed voice of the mate, cursing to himself. Parton wheeled about and looked out into the cabin. There was no one there. Then again he heard the cursing and also the sound of the fall of some object, not very heavy, to the deck. The noises unmistakably came from his own berth on the other side of the ship and scarcely fifteen feet away from him. He stepped toward it, and, through the half-open door, saw the mate bending over his bed and pulling and hauling its sheets and blankets about in evident search.

Parton's rage was quick and furious. With two bounds he cleared the space which intervened between him and the stooping man. In an instant he had the astonished mate by the collar, and had dragged him backwards out of the stateroom to the floor of the cabin itself. The mate, at first too surprised to exclaim, was prevented from doing so

later by the tight grasp of Parton's fingers on his wind-pipe. For a moment or two the men rolled on the cabin floor. The mate struggled valiantly. Neither made any sound—the mate could not have if he had wished to and Parton was too thoroughly engaged to feel that waste of breath would be wise. They were not unevenly matched; but Parton had the advantage of position and the other and great advantage of having taken his opponent unawares. Besides, the grasp which he had closed on the mate's wind-pipe was beginning to weaken the vigor of the man. Gradually, however, the mate's steady pull downward on the back of Parton's neck began to tell and to draw their faces closer together. Then with a snap as vicious as a dog's the mate's teeth closed on Parton's hair, and as Parton jerked his head upwards, a great sheaf of it was literally pulled from his head. At this the spirit of the animal infuriated broke loose in Parton, and once, twice, three times he struck full, hard fist-blows on the corner of the mate's jaw. Gradually the man's hold relaxed, his eyes turned upward and he went limp there on the floor.

Parton knew exactly what had happened to him, and was neither frightened by the ghastly look which his face assumed, nor sorry for the knock-out blows which had put it there. He was filled with the exultation of an animal which has won a fight, and for a moment he looked down at his foe with real and aboriginal satisfaction in his rapidly beating heart. He loosened his hold, rolled the man about a bit to be sure that his unconsciousness was real and not assumed, and then rose. On the table in the cabin ordinarily stood a pitcher of drinking water.

It was a great silver-plated affair swinging on a pivot between two uprights and provided with an ornate tray, bestrewn with flourishes and other evidences of the silver-chasers' art. It had been given to the Captain by admiring townspeople. Parton started for it, but it was not in its usual place. He had hardly had time to wonder at this when a calm voice said:

"Was you lookin' for th' water, sir? I'll throw some in his face. He looks like he needed it—bad. I just got some fresh here. I come down a while ago and took it up to fill it. I'm mighty glad I come down jest as I did—I got here in time to see th' hull thing. It was an all-right scrap. He'll be crazy when he wakes up—if he's got enough left in him; but I don't believe he'll tackle *you* ag'in. Not him! No, sir, b' John Quincy Adams, as th' Cap'n uset to say, not him."

Parton had not breath enough to permit him to reply to this speech, even if he could have found words. He fancied that he had done something now which would bring things to a climax, and a very disagreeable one for him, without delay. If no one had seen the encounter it might have been possible that the mate would keep it secret for his own good among the men. But now such a course was hardly likely. The presence of this man as a witness would undoubtedly drive the bully to the extreme measure of assuming a commander's prerogative and in some way making Parton pay for the assault. Parton wondered if he would order him to be put into irons. Of course, if he did, he would have to submit to the humiliation as gracefully as he could, for the whole crew would be at the mate's disposal to do with him as he told them to. That also would give him free

hand to search the cabin, but Parton smiled as he reflected that he would find nothing there.

"Yes, sir," the impassive sailor went on, "I saw the hull business, and I'm dum glad you licked him. If there was ever a man a-needin' of it, it was him. Three of us had fixed it up between us to take turns a-lickin' of him after we got ashore; but out here to sea we can't do nothin', you know. We can't do nothin' out to sea. *I've* seen him in your bunk before. We've most of us that's been down here at all seen him at one time or another haulin' over your stuff. He must a-thought you had somethin' good an' worth while stealin', to take so much trouble for to find it."

The man stood, somewhat awkwardly for a moment, evidently waiting for a reply. Parton was at a loss what to say.

"I'm awfully sorry that it has happened," he said at last.

"Well, I can't say that I be, or that any o' the men forward would be if they sh'd hear of it. But they won't *hear* of it unless you or he tells 'em. I ain't a-goin' to tell 'em. It's yours an' his affair, an' I reckon that he'll think so, too. Course you ain't got no right to wallop the man in c'mand; but neither he ain't got no right to go a-tryin' to steal your stuff, whatever it is—an' a-stealin' some of it."

"What do you mean?" asked Parton, puzzled.

"Oh, he stole some English bank-notes out o' your belt after you quit wearin' it, an' I know it, 'cause I *see* him do it. He's goin' to wake up now. See his eyelids shakin'? They allus shake like that just afore a man wakes up what has been knocked out."

Parton leaned over the prostrate man to see if the

sailor's observation had been accurate. There were unquestionably signs of returning consciousness. Parton reached back for the water which was still in the sailor's hand when the latter drew back a foot or two and said:

"Fore he wakes up, lemme tell you somethin'. If he tries to make any muss with you, every man in th' fo'c's'le will stand by you. Sure. Certain sure. An' if, after we get ashore, he tries to come any shinnanegin business with you, you can count on me to swear that he *stole* from you, an' that I see him do it. He'll find that he can't cut our grub an' bully *us* the minute the Captain's took sick. We'll stand by you, every man Jack that's on the hull dam ship. You c'n tell 'im that when he wakes up. I'm goin' up now. If you don't want me to tell nothin' o' what's happened, I won't, unless it's necessary. If you do, I'll tell it here and I'll tell in court that I see him steal. The dam cuss!"

CHAPTER TWENTY

A WARNING IN THE NICK OF TIME

Undivided attention is what a feller wants to practice when he's fightin'. A kitten licked a bulldog once, because the bulldog looked around to see what time it was.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy*.

It is not a pretty sight to see a man slowly wake up after having had a knock-out blow. I have known old "sports," who had, during all their lives, attended prize fights as often as they could find one and raise the money for a place at the ring side, to turn sick while they watched the vanquished man's slow, confused struggles back to consciousness. Strangely enough, to most men it is more distressing to see a man recover his wits than it is to see him lose them. The latter is quick, and short and sharp. The former is often a slow and evidently painful process. Parton kneeled at the mate's side and bathed his head with a towel wet from the pitcher, as he first began to move, and when intelligence filtered slowly into his eyes, the first thing that they saw was Parton's face. There was no anger in their gaze; but there was fright. The mate shrank away from Parton's eyes and that firm, hard, clean-cut English face, as if they had been very terrible to look upon. He was pale to ghastliness when his breath first began to come back to him in long, shuddering gasps, which almost whistled between his teeth and blew bubbles of bloody foam upon his lips.

In sheer physical weakness he let his head fall back on Parton's arm and went wholly limp again. But that was only for an instant. There had been instilled into him a dread of the man who was supporting him, which amounted to abject and unreasoning terror. All the threats had gone out of Parton's face and eyes; but the mate shuddered and shrank from him, as if that awful grip which had been upon his throat was likely to tighten there again, and as if those terrible blows of that merciless fist were about to rain again upon his quivering face. He shook and trembled in his terror.

"Don't! Oh, don't!" he said weakly. "Don't hit me again, Mr. Carter. For God's sake, don't hit me again. You'll kill me if you hit me. Don't! Don't!"

Parton was really shocked at this exhibition of the fear which no person but the vanquished strong man can show. The timidity of the physically weak or cowardly is much less impressive than the pulsating, shrinking terror of utterly defeated strength.

"I shall not strike you again," said Parton, involuntarily putting his contemptuous pity into his voice. "I shall not strike you again. Let me help you up. You must not lie there."

The mate struggled to his feet unsteadily, and, hanging to the side of the table, pulled himself along until he reached a chair, into which he sunk with the limp, crushed lassitude of the utterly exhausted. He laid his arms out on the table before him and his head dropped to them as if the weight of it were much greater than his shoulders could support. For ten minutes he scarcely moved. Parton, seeing how complete his victory had been, and feeling half

ashamed of it, moved away from him and stood near the door leading to the companionway, ready at once to help the mate and to prevent anyone from descending to the cabin where they might see him while he was in this pitiable state. He saw with deep worry as to what its effect might be upon the men that the mate's face was swelling rapidly, and was already so misshapen as to be scarcely recognizable. His own was bruised and smarting, and there was a little trickle of blood from above his forehead where the mate's teeth had torn the hair out; but he knew that he showed no such punishment as marked the other man.

He spoke to him in a low tone, so that no sailor who might be near to the skylight might overhear him.

"I'll have to fix you up a bit before you go on deck. Your face seems knocked about some. Let me put some cold towels on it. I think it would be better—for—for the men not to see you until—until you are washed up a bit. Don't you?"

The mate made no protest while Parton wiped him off with wet towels and made him as presentable as he could. Seven bells (11:30) sounded faintly from the forecastle deck, and Parton counted them mentally.

"Now, I'll tell you," said he with as good a pretense at cheerfulness as was possible in the circumstances. "You'll have to go on deck at eight bells to take the sun, won't you?"

"I suppose so," said the mate.

"Well, I shan't, so it is necessary to look after you first. The less the men see of us in the condition we are in the better it will be for both of us. One man

saw the fight; but I have made him promise not to speak of it on deck, and I think he will keep his promise."

"Thank you," said the mate, greatly to Parton's surprise.

"Oh, that's all right. The affair isn't very much to the credit of either of us. Now I'm going to give you some brandy to brace up on, and I'm going to keep these towels changed upon your face every five minutes until you have to go up. It will make you feel all right by that time, I think."

"All right," said the mate. There was a look of puzzled surprise in his face. "All right; but what in Hell do *you* do it for?"

"Why, we're both ashamed, I fancy," said Parton, as easily as he could.

He went to the locker and mixed a stiff brandy grog for both himself and the mate and then, after giving one of the glasses to him, sat down on the opposite side of the table and slowly drank his own. His hands still trembled violently—the reaction from the rapid exertion of the fight was sufficient to cause that—and there were uncertain notes in his voice.

Finally he spoke.

"Now I believe that it would be a good plan for us to have an understanding about this affair and about some other things before you go on deck, don't you?" he said, slowly.

"I suppose we'll have to," said the mate.

"Well, what are you going to do about this fight after we reach land?" asked Parton.

"Nothing," said the mate. "What could I do?"

"Is that understood?" asked Parton, looking at him closely.

"I said it was," said the mate.

"All right, I'll take your word for it," said Parton. "I may as well tell you that that is the much wiser plan for you to follow. There was a witness, as I have already told you, of the fight. What I have not told you and what I tell you now is that there are witnesses other than myself to the—the somewhat—unusual liberties which you have from time to time taken with my traps there in my bunk. I could very readily get testimony to the fact that you have—well, that you have already borrowed a little money from me without asking me to—to lend it to you."

The mate glanced quickly at him. It was the first time he had even moved his eyes in other than a slow and ponderous way since Parton had lifted him from the floor, and the effect of the quick motion on his bloated and disfigured face was not pleasant.

"Yes," said Parton, "I have a witness who actually saw you rob me of some bank-notes. Now, you see, that rather reverses our positions. I mean that it changes us about according to your way of thinking. You have been acting on the assumption that for one reason or another you had me in your power. We won't go into the reasons now, and we won't go into them at any other time. The idea was mistaken; but you had it and you intended to use it in one way or another. The Captain knew it and warned me against you before he fell ill, and you have shown, ever since his unfortunate attack, that you felt at complete liberty to ill-treat and insult me to your heart's content. Now, of course, all that must stop—and stop to-day. Is that agreed?"

"Yes," said the mate. "It's agreed; but what you say ain't true."

"We won't discuss that," said Parton. "It is agreed, is it, that until this voyage ends you will treat me as you ought to, and show me as much consideration as a passenger on the ship ought to have?"

"Yes," said the mate.

"Now, about the money," said Parton, relentlessly. He realized that for the time he had this man in his power, and also realized that such an opportunity might not occur again. "You will have to return that to me, of course. How much did you take?"

"Fifty pounds," said the mate, sullenly. Then he reached into his pocket and the look which he threw at Parton would have killed him if vicious looks had killing qualities.

"No," said Parton, slowly, evidently thinking out his plan as he went along, "you must give that money back to me in the presence of a witness, and you must acknowledge, when you give it to me, that you stole it."

The mate almost started from his seat.

"You must think I'm a damn fool," he said.

"I don't," said Parton. "You are not. You would be, though, if you did not do exactly as I tell you to. If you failed to, I should simply have you taken into charge when we reach port, and with my testimony and with that of your own sailor, I could send you to prison for a considerable term."

Black looked at him sullenly while this speech was in progress. Parton could not tell just how much impression he had made on him. He paused for a moment. There was necessity for thought here. The man undoubtedly believed now that he was "Carter," although he had wondered more than once

at dim familiarities about the face and Parton knew it. He knew that if he told him that he had been fooled, and that the passenger was really Parton, of South Africa, the mate would be even more afraid of him than he was now; but there was something else to be considered. It might make him desperate enough for actual murder. Any day a chance step might take Parton near enough to the rail so that a quick blow and a heave might send him overboard, with small chance of being rescued. It was better, therefore, that he should not make the revelation. But he did not stop his lecture.

The mate's physical vigor had begun, slowly, to return to him, and he looked at his tormenter with a face so flushed that it seemed as if the mildest result must be bleeding at the nose, while the muscles of his hands pulled their thumbs and fingers into fists, and those on his bull neck swelled and pulsated with great anger. But he said nothing.

"Now see here," said Parton. "You are a liar, a thief and a general blackguard. You are a coward, and I can send you to prison. Understand all these things. Furthermore, I can thrash you as you deserve to be thrashed every day that we are together on this ship. I have done it once and I will do it again, and as often as it may be necessary in order to make you thoroughly understand your position in its relation to mine. Now will you do as I have told you to?"

The mate said nothing and Parton's anger grew.

The man's silence angered Parton still more. He knew that he was foolishly allowing temper to get the better of him; but he did not listen to the voice of his better judgment. He had just resolved that

he would not reveal his real identity to the mate, and he knew that this decision was based upon sound and proper reasoning; but, now, infuriated by the man's silence, he went on, with a voice almost a hiss:

"Why, you outrageous idiot! Did you really think that you could force *me* to do anything I did not want to do? Why, Black! Black—you must have forgotten me!"

The mate started, and Parton saw that now he knew him. He must have half-recognized him all along, he thought, but now he really knew!

"Now do you know me?" he demanded, leaning toward him fiercely. "Now do you know me? Now do you remember how I marched you into camp in front of a pair of empty pockets? Now do you remember?"

There could be no manner of doubt that the mate remembered. Amazement was written on his swollen face. He gasped, and stepped back a foot.

"Parton!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Parton!" said his adversary.

The mate, not yet recovered from his amazement, glared at him in silence for a moment.

"Do you agree, now, to what I have proposed?" demanded Parton.

With growing recognition in his eyes the mate kept an amazed silence. Parton intensely enjoyed his dire discomfiture. But, suddenly, an answer came quickly and unexpectedly. The mate lunged forward fiercely at him with a brutal oath. The blow struck Parton full in the chest, and, as he was not in the least prepared for it, laid him back across the cabin table. For the next three or four minutes the men were again writhing on the floor in a desperate

struggle, and at the outset the mate had all the advantage of it. He evidently appreciated the wisdom of the tactics which Parton had used with him a few moments before, for his constant effort was to get his fingers on the Englishman's throat. Once or twice they were there and were half curled about it in a grip that it would have been impossible to have broken if it had been permitted to have gone an infinitesimal part of an inch farther; but by clever work with his elbow, Parton forced the grasping hand away. Still, he was at a great disadvantage and was rapidly becoming exhausted. The whole weight of the burly sailor was thrust upon his chest and it was sadly interfering with his breathing. His situation was desperate. The mate knew it and on his face, which he managed to keep pretty well out of Parton's way, there was something which was as near to an expression of savage satisfaction as its swollen and distorted condition would permit. He lacked the self-control that Parton had shown, and he wished to carry his victory to the utmost limit. Also he wished to turn it to account.

"Now, damn you," he gasped, "now I've got you! Now, damn you, I've got you! *Me* a thief! Why, you jackass, don't you suppose I know that you're running away from the police yourself? Now, I'm going to kill you, I reckon! Yes, I'm going to kill you! You've got to agree to give me half of everything you've hidden on this ship, or I'll kill you. Hear me? I'll kill you! Where are them diamonds? Where are they? Where are they?"

Up to this time the strange struggle had been a singularly quiet one. Parton's breath was fast becoming exhausted, and there was in him the convic-

tion that the mate really meant what he said and that he would kill him if he did not tell him where the diamonds were. The idea of gratifying this desire for information did not, however, even suggest itself to his mind as a possibility. He did not answer the man at all. He was almost too exhausted to struggle, and, also, he knew that struggling would be worse than useless unless some change in their relative positions occurred. He lay almost passive in the mate's grasp. For what seemed to him a long time, but what could not have been really more than a part of one minute, the two men remained thus on the floor of the cabin, almost motionless except for the heaving of the bodies caused by deep exhalations and intakes of breath. Parton could feel that the blood was being concentrated in his head and face. His hearing became preternaturally acute. He heard eight bells sound on deck, although the bell was on the forecastle, quite at the other end of the ship, and could not ordinarily be heard in the cabin except under certain very favorable conditions of the wind, which did not exist that day. He heard the Captain's constant and by no means loud reiteration of "John, John, John." He heard the step of a sailor's bare feet on the deck above him. He saw, with impotent fury, the distorted face of the mate leaning close over his and felt the heavy and ill-smelling breath of the man in his eyes and nostrils. He gave one convulsive struggle which he had made up his mind must be his last. This rolled the two men quite across the cabin until they came up noisily with their feet against the side of the Captain's berth and heads just under the table edge. The "John, John—" seemed to be interrupted. Parton idly won-

dered with that wonderful rapidity of irrelevant thought, which is peculiar to human emergency, whether the old man would be able to see them as they lay there and whether to his benumbed intelligence their positions, struggling and prostrate on the floor, would indicate to him that anything unusual was going on. The pressure on his chest increased. He felt that his strength would give way utterly in a moment, and that unconsciousness would come, and he realized this almost with pleasure. He knew that his breath was stopping and his eyes closing. He saw the mate's hand raised clenched above his face and waited for the blow which he knew would follow and which he felt certain would end the battle. He felt that it would be a relief to have it fall. It seemed a long time in coming.

It was while this was happening that a thing occurred so strange, so uncanny, so terrifying to both the men on the floor that the mate did not strike the blow, and Parton would not have felt it if it had. From the Captain's berth, where he had lain practically insensible for so many days, and from whence during all that time there had issued no sound except that monotonous singsong of his harmless expletive came a low, continuous cry. It was unlike anything that Parton had ever heard. It slowly grew in volume, and its quavering note rose as it progressed. At first it had been scarcely audible; but in a few seconds it shrieked out, tremulous and terrifying, until it filled the cabin and reached upward to the deck, in a shrill, falsetto shriek, scarcely human in its timbre, but intense and horrid in some undefinable quality which Parton afterwards could never find the word to describe. It was such a shriek as might have

come from a man in the throes of some horrible death. It was such a shriek as might have aroused men at a greater distance than any compassed within the lines of the little ship on which it rose and fell, and rose and fell, and died away and came again. It tore Parton's heart with an uncanny horror that almost made him forget that the mate was slowly choking the life out of him. It so astounded and terrified the mate that his hold on Parton's throat relaxed. It brought three sailors tumbling down the companion-way stairs from the deck itself with whitened faces and feet spurred by a belief that murder was being done in some new and awful way below.

In an instant Parton was on his feet, and the mate, who was also struggling to get up, had been stopped and laid completely prostrate by a blow from the Captain's silver pitcher, which toppled off the table as he caught wildly at the cover to help himself in rising.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

A SMELL OF SMOKE

A fire at sea is one of God's great sarcasms. To see her burn you'd think 'twas oil, not water, she was floatin' on.—The Logbook of the Lyddy.

There could be no hiding the facts of the fights from the whole crew now. The news spread like wildfire among the men, and most of them secretly partisanned Parton's cause, although the sailor who had seen the first encounter kept his word and said nothing, or almost nothing, about it.

The mate, knocked unconscious for the second time, recovered slowly, and was too weak from loss of blood and too sickened by pain to make it possible for him to do anything particularly aggressive that afternoon or night.

Parton's place was a puzzling one. He momentarily expected that the mate's fury over his second defeat would at least result in an attempt to carry out his threat and have him put into irons; but the hours passed and nothing of the sort was done. Parton nursed his bruised and swollen neck and face as well as he could; but the prospect seemed to him to be a most unutterably gloomy one. He could have fared no worse if he had stayed ashore and taken his chances with his stepfather and Scotland Yard. The situation on board was almost an impossible one. It seemed out of the question that it should remain in *statu quo* until the ship landed in Boston. And even

then—Parton could not predict in his mind what was likely to occur when that time came.

A new and imminent worry also grew out of the Captain's condition. That wild shriek had meant that some change had come in it. It crossed Parton's mind at first that the cry might have been caused by the fact that the old man had witnessed from his bunk the struggle on the cabin floor, and that he had emitted that shriek because it was his only way of expressing horror at what he may have thought was impending murder; but this seemed too impossible to be worthy of serious consideration. The period of the Captain's apparent loss of reasoning power had extended over nearly two weeks. During that time he had not only been unable to intelligently express himself, but Parton felt sure that he had been unable to interpret in his mind the events which passed within the very limited range of his vision from the berth. To believe that he had really cried out because he had seen that the mate was likely to commit murder would necessitate the assumption that he was not only capable of intelligent understanding of passing events, but of sufficient command of his body to make it possible for him to scream aloud when he found that it was advisable to do so. This seemed impossible; but if it had been chance, it had been a happy chance. Parton learned that the Captain had fallen into a deep stupor after the episode; but when he went to the companionway entrance to go down to see him, he was informed by the sailor who had been put on guard there that the mate had given orders that he was in no circumstances to be permitted to go below. This angered him, but it did not surprise him. He could hardly

feel that the situation had changed for the worse except in so far as the personal discomfort which the fight and the resulting exile from the cabin might be considered an aggravation of its discomforts. He knew now that for the remainder of the voyage he would have to look out for his safety with exceeding care; but the mere fact that the mate had attacked him showed that he recognized the strength of the charge which Parton held over his head. And it was a comfort to Parton to reflect that the mate, while he could be by no means certain of the outcome of the charges which he could bring against Parton, could feel no possible doubt about the outcome of those which might be brought against himself. There was comfort in this. Parton felt that, perhaps, the fights had been good things after all, for they had placed him in a position where he could demand the silence of the mate concerning the diamonds and his identity, after they should reach land. At the same time there was now undoubted danger of foul play on board unless he watched with superhuman caution.

About one o'clock a sailor went to Parton where he was sitting, aft of the wheel, and asked him if he wished to have his dinner brought to him there. Even while Parton was considering what reply he should make to this, there came through the skylight a repetition of that slow, blood-curdling cry. The shrill, vibrating shriek quavered upward, not loudly, but with a strange, penetrating thrill that made Parton start from his seat and brought more than one sailor running from the forward deck, where they were gathered after their noonday meal, smoking their pipes and gossiping about the morning's exciting episodes. Entirely disregarding the mate's

orders that he was not to be permitted to go below, Parton dashed to the companionway and down the four or five steps with long, jumping strides. No one offered to detain him and there was no one on watch at the cabin entrance. Parton went in, paying no attention whatever to the two figures which he saw in the dim light of the cabin were standing near the centre of the little room, leaning on the table, and gazing as if dumb-struck toward the Captain's berth. Parton, turning his head neither to the left nor to the right, went at once to the side of the old man. He lay there, to all appearance quite as he had been; but Parton saw with delighted wonder that there came a change of expression, slight but unmistakable on his face as he bent over him and asked him slowly and with an effort to make his words very distinct, if he wished to have anything done for him. It was evident to Parton that the old man made a desperate effort to reply to him in some way; but he failed utterly. Two sailors who had descended into the cabin after Parton and who were standing close behind him as he leaned over the Captain's berth were at this juncture ordered roughly out of the cabin by the mate. That the men should have come in at all, Parton reflected, was an evidence of how completely the discipline of the ship had gone to pieces. After the men had slouched away, to the accompaniment of much angry expletive from the mate, he turned furiously on Parton.

"What in Hell are you doing down here?" he said, wickedly. "I gave orders that you were to stay on deck until this voyage was ended. If I catch you down here again, I'll have you put in irons. Now get out!"

Parton did not strike him again, although the temptation was strong in him to do so; but he wheeled on him so suddenly and so fiercely that the mate almost fell backward in his effort to avoid what he thought would be a blow.

"Damn you and damn your orders," said Parton, grimly and quietly. "Your orders! Give them to the sailors who have got to obey them and who can't strike back. Don't give them to me, you cowardly thief."

He had advanced a step toward the mate, who by this time had placed the width of the cabin table between the infuriated but quiet young Englishman and himself.

"If you dare to make any remark to me or about me on this voyage from now until the time that it ends, I'll thrash you again, and next time I'll thrash you so thoroughly that it will be many a day before you'll command anything bigger than a bed in a hospital bay. I came down here because I heard the Captain of this ship cry out as if he were in pain, and I thought that you were hurting him. I have reason to believe that you are not the kind of a man to hesitate at torturing a sick man. Now from this time until this voyage ends I shall be in this cabin as much as I like and out of it as much as I like. If you don't want my company here stay out of it yourself. If you bother me in any way whatsoever I will, first, call on the crew for assistance to put *you* in irons, and will get it, too; and then, when we go ashore I will see to it that you are kept in a safe place there too."

He made another move toward the mate and again the man dodged away from him. His body crouched, and that his muscles were tense as steel was visible,

even through his shirt and pea-jacket. But he struck no blow. A reason for this may have been that the sailor who had been in the cabin with him when Parton entered quietly went to the side of the young Englishman and ranged himself there, while the two men who had descended into the room in response to the Captain's uncanny cry also remained, in evident defiance of the mate's orders, and were but too obviously prepared to take the side of the passenger in any fight which might occur between him and the unpopular man who had, through the Captain's illness, fallen into the supreme command of the ship. Parton stood waiting for him, notwithstanding the evidently friendly intentions of the sailors, and there was in his face that iron look which had made him cower once or twice before. It made him cower again, and with a muttered oath he slouched out of the cabin, the two sailors who were standing in the companionway entrance retreating before him. After he had reached the deck Parton could hear him cursing the men and giving various bullying orders.

For a moment he stood quietly listening to him, and then went to the Captain's berth, where he saw that a strange change had occurred in the appearance of the old man. There still were mutterings; but they were no longer confined to the words of the queer oath which he had substituted for more offensive swearing in order to please his wife. In fact the noises which now came from his lips were not words at all; but mere incoherent, unconnected, almost inarticulate sounds. But Parton scarcely felt that the change was for the worse, for there was, unmistakably, a gleam of real intelligence in the eyes of the

prostrate seaman. His skin, too, which had been ghastly white, glowed as with a fever, and the hands which had for days opened and closed with an almost rhythmic regularity, now moved spasmodically, and with uncanny rapidity. There seemed to be something almost desperate in their continual struggles to open and shut quickly. Their movement was so strange, and so great a change was indicated by it that for a moment Parton kept his eyes fixed upon them, in the meantime scarcely glancing at the Captain's face, and paying small attention to the torrent, slow moving but ceaseless, of unconnected words which bubbled from between his lips. From these words it was apparent to Parton that the old man's mind was dwelling, in its enfeebled state, on the fact that he had violated the insurance regulations, and had amongst his cargo the packages of Humberite. For over and over again came the words:

"Amidships! Amidships! Amidships!" And then, ever with the three iterations, came the word, "Humber! Humber! Humber!" At first Parton did not conceive the idea that there could be an intelligent intention in the Captain's babble; but then he remembered that the explosive which the Captain had told him about was stowed amidships, and that its name was Humberite. He wondered vaguely if death was impending for the old man, and if, as so many people declare is often the case with dying people, he was thinking with remorse of the fact that he was carrying the dangerous stuff without the knowledge of the underwriters in violation of his insurance agreement. Parton smiled gravely as he considered this possibility and wondered if there was

no greater sin on the soul of the old sailor than this, and wished that his own record was as clean.

He paid little attention to the other words for a moment, not dreaming that there had come in the condition of the patient a change which would permit him to either hold or express ideas, no matter how crudely. But there was a look of such anxiety and so much like the old intelligent expression of the face on the countenance of the prostrate man, that when Parton caught one of the words which followed, he started and paled with a sudden thought of peril. The word was "Fire," and it was pronounced and repronounced with that strange monotony of repetition which had been one of the characteristics of the Captain's mental disease from the first. If Parton had studied medicine he would have known that the old man was at this moment showing unmistakable symptoms of a new and not unfavorable stage of the disorder which had stricken him. He would have known that his trouble from the start had been caused by a lesion of one of the veins near the brain centre controlling the vasomotor nerves of speech, and that this change from the repetition of the purely meaningless words of his queer oath to other words, which might possibly have some meaning, might indicate that the blood clot caused by the brain lesion was being absorbed through a phenomenon of nature, and that the power of expressing ideas intelligently was returning to the old man. He would have known another thing which surely would have increased his pity and sympathy for the sturdy old mariner a hundredfold—that very likely during the entire time that he had been lying there, prostrate and apparently witless, he might very well have been

able to think and reason as clearly as he ever could, and been denied only the power of expressing his thoughts. He would have known that those who have recovered from such attacks—and such recoveries are so rare that every one which has been known has been as carefully studied by the medical men who have been fortunate enough to observe it as ever emergence of the sun from an eclipse was by the astronomers—have often said that during the entire time when they had lain without the power of consecutive or coherent speech, their intelligences were abnormally acute and their knowledge of their own inability to express the thoughts that came to them, merely added mental torture to the awful physical pain which beset them. But these things Parton did not know, and, therefore, while his heart beat fast with pity for the old man, he found a certain satisfaction in the belief that while the Captain was probably suffering acutely, merciful nature had removed from him the power of realizing or thinking of his pain.

But suddenly he noticed a change of expression in the Captain's face. It showed that he had some control over the muscles, for there was a drawing up of the nose and a succession of definite and unmistakable sniffs. There was, also, in the eyes a look of such pitiful entreaty that Parton was impressed by the thought that there was in the Captain's mind an idea which he was struggling desperately to communicate. For a time no words came from the lips; but there were many repetitions of that unmistakable sniffing action of the nostrils. Then over and over again, a hundred times for each word, came the repetitions of "Humber," "amidships" and "fire."

These were again followed by the strange, sniffing contortions of the face.

Suddenly an awful thought flashed into Parton's brain. Could it be possible that the old man really had an idea and that he was attempting to convey it? Did the words and the sniffing mean that he smelled fire in the ship, and that he feared that it was amidships, where it might ignite the Humberite and blow up the ship? Was the old man trying to warn him? He had heard that the human faculties in some stages of some illnesses become preternaturally acute. He remembered, in a flash, an experience he had had himself, when he was lying ill of fever in South Africa. He had heard with perfect distinctness a conversation between two other men, which was carried on in such low tones and at such a distance, that in health he could not possibly have caught a word of it. Was it possible that the Captain's illness had intensified his sense of smell, and that there was perceptible to him as he lay there, helpless in his berth, an odor of fire which was too delicate to be detected by the nostrils of a normal man? He shuddered to think of what fire would mean to a ship laden with the powerful explosive. He remembered what the Captain had said about the difference between Humberite and some other explosives—that the force of Humberite was always upwards, while the force of dynamite was always downwards. He even remembered that they had discussed the possible effect of an explosion of the stuff on the *Lydia Skolfeld*. The Captain had said that it would blow the upperworks of the ship into a thousand bits, while it might expend so little force in a downward direction as to scarcely start her bottom planking.

He leaned quickly over the Captain with a new look of anxiety and comprehension on his face.

"What do you mean, Captain? Do you mean that the ship is on fire, and that if it reaches the Humberite amidships, it may blow her up? Is that what you mean?"

He gazed eagerly into the face of the sick man and watched the eyes, which, it seemed to him, showed unquestionable evidences of intelligence. But there came no reply. Indeed, instead of any words of whatever kind, now, the noises from the Captain's lips became suddenly wholly formless, and quite devoid of any possibility of meaning. Had it not been for that look of baffled intelligence and meaning in the eyes, Parton would have turned away with a sigh of pity, and paid no more attention to the vocal vagaries of the sick man. But there was unquestionable intelligence in the eyes, and there was on the face, as a whole, an expression of strain and anxiety which had not been there before since he had been stricken. And all the time the nostrils dilated and contracted, dilated and contracted, as do those of a man who detects some unpleasant odor in the air. Parton, noticing this, almost involuntarily mimicked the facial movements. He himself sniffed the air of the cabin, and he saw, or thought he saw, a slight expression of relief pass over the Captain's face as he did so. The old man's eyes were fixed on him with an intensity of gaze which seemed to be almost painful. But Parton could smell nothing except the usual odors of the ship's cabin. For a moment he turned his face away from the Captain and gazed helplessly about him. When he looked back at the Captain the old man seemed to search his face for

some sign that he had accomplished something by his survey of the cabin.

"I can smell nothing," said Parton, almost ridiculing himself for the idea that the old man, who was incapable of speech, could understand what others said.

Again the Captain sniffed, sniffed, sniffed. And as he did so he winked. The power of that movement had never been taken from him. From the first he had had, apparently, some control over the movements of his eyelids and eyeballs. An idea occurred to Parton. Perhaps there was a possibility of communicating with the old man through this very ability of his—about the only power of movement which remained to him. Parton acted on the idea without hesitation.

"Captain," he said, slowly and very distinctly, "I can't understand you; but perhaps I can suggest a plan by which we may be able to communicate with each other. See if you can understand me."

He looked eagerly at the face of the sick man, and he believed, although he was not sure, that there was a flash of intelligence in the anxious eyes there.

"Now try to understand me, Captain," said Parton, taking care to be distinct in his enunciation. "I shall speak very slowly, and if I am right in what I say, you are to tell me so by closing your eyes once. If I am wrong you are to let me know that by closing your eyes twice. Once for yes, and twice for no. Do you understand?"

And the Captain winked once!

In half a dozen ways Parton tried to prove to himself that the Captain did not understand him; but that his winking was mere haphazard, muscular

movement. But every test that he could think of proved otherwise, and finally he was convinced. Then, for the first time he realized the terrible agonies which the old man must have suffered as he lay there wholly conscious but unable to express himself. He wondered if those two cries had been intelligent efforts and not mere meaningless shrieks of physical agony. He wondered if, in the first place, the Captain had tried to call him and in the second instance had tried to call others to his assistance. He wasted little time, however, in wondering about what was past; but started on his experiment.

"Now, Captain," he said, very slowly and with very careful enunciation, "do you understand me? You are to wink once if I am right in what I guess at your meaning. You are to winkle twice if I am wrong. Do you understand?"

The Captain winked once.

"I am not wrong in thinking that you understand?"

The Captain winked twice.

"What did you mean by the words which you used a few moments ago? Was there some meaning in them which you could not clearly express to me?"

The Captain winked once.

"They were not mere words which you could not help saying, and which had no meaning?"

The Captain winked twice.

"A few moments ago you said three words, 'Fire,' 'Humber,' and 'amidships.' Did you mean by these words and by the action of your nostrils that you smelled fire on board and that it might reach the Humberite which is stored amidships?"

The Captain winked once, and there was an expression of relief on his face which could not be mistaken.

"I cannot smell any fire," said Parton, now leaning forward with an intensity of interest which the old man evidently recognized and was pleased by.
"Are you certain that you do?"

The Captain winked once.

"Shall I call the mate?"

The Captain winked twice.

"You don't want me to call the mate. Is that right?"

The Captain winked once.

"Shall I call someone else?"

The Captain winked once.

"Who shall I call? I will name the men over and when I come to the right name, let me know by winking once at me. Do you understand?"

The Captain winked once.

Then Parton named the crew over as well as he could. Long as he had been on the ship he was not familiar with all of their names; but most of them he knew. The man who had come to him and told him that the men would stand by him if the mate tried to put him in irons or otherwise harm him, after the fight, was named Wilson. Parton remembered that. He had spoken several of the men's names before he came to Wilson's and the Captain had made no sign. But when he came to Wilson's, the old man's eyes closed tightly, once. Again and again Parton tried the experiment, until at last he was thoroughly satisfied that the old man wished to have him call Wilson.

He lost no time in hurrying to the deck, and a backward glance at the Captain seemed to show an expression of satisfaction on his face.

A sailor was busy coiling rope not far from the entrance to the companionway. Most of the watch which was at the time on duty was busy near him. The mate was standing by them, watching them surlily. He glanced at Parton in some surprise and a gleam of hatred shot across his face. Parton saw him, of course, but he paid no attention to him whatever. He spoke to the sailor nearest to him.

"Go and tell Wilson," said Parton quickly, "to come aft at once. Look sharp."

"Stay where you are," said the mate, taking a step forward.

The man, who had jumped to his feet and was evidently about to start, hesitated for an instant. Parton looked first at the mate and then at the man. The position was a difficult one.

"Do as I tell you," he said, finally to the sailor. "Do as I tell you and look sharp about it. The Captain of this ship wishes to see Wilson in the cabin. Go and tell him to come aft. The Captain is in command again. Do as I tell you."

It was instantly evident that the mate did not intend to permit the man to go, and Parton saw chances of new difficulties. The situation, however, admitted of no delay. Parton made a quick step toward the mate, who involuntarily retreated a few feet. The man rose and went forward after Wilson. The mate and Parton remained almost absolutely quiet during his absence. In a moment he returned followed by the wondering Wilson. He was the sailor who had told Parton that if worst came to worst the men would stand by him in a conflict with the mate.

"Go down into the cabin, Wilson," said Parton, still keeping his eyes on the mate.

Wilson, wonderingly did as he was told. He had almost disappeared into the companionway when Parton started after him. The mate made a movement as if to follow.

"You are not to come down," said Parton calmly. "That is another order from the Captain of the ship."

The mate still followed him as he took another step toward the companionway. Parton scarcely knew what to do. He did not particularly object to having the mate present at the strange experiment which he was about to try in the cabin, so far as he himself was concerned, but he feared that his presence there might annoy and confuse the Captain, who was already under a great strain. He made up his mind quickly. Stopping short where he was he made an appeal to the four or five men who were standing near watching the scene curiously.

"Men," he said calmly, but very slowly and distinctly, "the Captain does not wish to have the mate come below at present. I am sorry that this is so; but it is. Now, if he makes any attempt to follow me into the cabin—*I want you to stop him!* Do you understand? The Captain wants to see Wilson, and he wants to see him alone with me. I will tell you this much about the interview. It has to do with the safety of every man on this ship. The Captain is ill, and if the mate went below with me, it might so trouble him that he would be unable to continue the communication which he has begun with me. If the mate attempts to follow me, *stop him, by God!* You may be saving your own lives by doing it!"

There could be no doubt, now, about the truth of Wilson's statement that the men were ready to

mutiny against the mate. Three of them instantly stepped before the companionway door. When Parton approached, they separated and let him pass; but they drew closely and menacingly together again as the mate made a motion to follow him. That settled the matter of who was really in authority on that ship. From the looks on the sailors' faces, Parton believed that they would have pitched the mate into the sea if he had made any real attempt to go in with him. The mate evidently thought something of this sort, too, for he stopped, swore at them viciously and walked away. The tables were turned. It was now the mate who could not enter the cabin of the *Lydia Skolfeld*.

Once inside the cabin, Parton explained the situation to Wilson as quickly as he could. The man heard the extraordinary story with open-mouthed attention. Parton had been afraid that he would lose his nerve when he told him that there was reason to believe that the ship was on fire and that the Captain's more acute sense of smell had detected the odor of it; but he did not.

During this short, prefatory statement, the Captain (they were standing close at the side of his berth) watched them intently. Once or twice Parton asked questions of him, which he answered by winking, as before. The sailor was greatly impressed by this, and tried, himself, to see if he could detect the odor of fire. After a moment's thought he put his head under the cabin table. The deck there was covered by a heavy, cheap rug. The sailor pulled it away.

"I can smell it myself, sir!" he said, excitedly.
"The smell's comin' up through this hatch!"

Parton had not even known that there was a hatchway concealed by the rug. The Captain showed by his face that he was satisfied by the way things were going on.

"If I could heave her off, sir," Wilson went on, "I could soon tell what was the matter; but I couldn't do it alone. I'd have to have another man to help me, sir."

Instantly Parton went to the companionway and ran to the deck. He said nothing, but beckoned to the first man he saw to come below. The mate was standing against the rail, and watched the episode surlily, but at first made no motion to interfere. Then, as the man started to obey Parton's signal, he made a movement as if he would have interposed between him and the companionway, but the men who were on guard took a step or two forward, and he changed his mind.

The sailor went below with Parton. The latter made no explanations to him. He could smell the smoke himself by this time. The removal of the rug had apparently released the odor, although no smoke could be seen. Parton hurriedly explained the situation to the man, and bade him help Wilson in removing the hatch.

"By God!" said the sailor. "That's what makes the deck hot amidships. The cargo's smoulderin'. I said that deck was hotter'n I'd ever known a deck to be before, an' the mate, he told me to go to Hell. Said I'd find things hotter yet down there."

The labor of getting the table out of the way and lifting the heavy hatch took not more than ten minutes; but it seemed like a long time to Parton. They had not raised one edge of it more than a fraction of

an inch before their fears were fully confirmed. A thin stream of smoke curled through the opening. Simultaneously they dropped their hold of it.

"Better leave it down, sir," said Wilson. "A fire'll burn ten times as fast if the air gets to it. I was on a ship on fire at sea once before. Better keep everything as tight as possible."

Parton glanced at the Captain. The old man's face was drawn into lines of anxiety. He met Parton's gaze with a slow, single wink.

"What do you mean, Captain?" asked Parton. "Is the man right? Is it better to leave the hatch down?"

The Captain winked once.

"What shall we do?" asked Parton. "Shall I tell the mate and have the hold pumped full?"

The Captain's eyes said "No."

"You don't mean to abandon the ship, do you?" asked Parton in surprise.

The Captain's eyes unmistakably said "Yes," and Parton knew the reason for it. He was thinking of the danger that the fire would reach the Humberite and blow the vessel up.

"Shall I tell the mate to have the boats manned and abandon the ship?" asked Parton.

There could be no doubt about the meaning of the Captain's following movement of the eyelid. Parton understood. The explosive, which would burn harmlessly when unconfined, was first sealed in cans and then tightly wedged in the ship's hold, packed close round about with cargo. The Captain feared an explosion.

Parton turned to the two men. It would not do to let them know the danger which they were really

in. He said nothing about the Humberite and its dreadful possibilities. His work was cut out for him and there was plenty of it. He must notify the mate of the dreadful situation, rush below and get his diamonds, tell these men here to get some clothes on the sick man, do it himself if they were too badly frightened to, and then see to it that the vessel was abandoned as quickly as she could be.

The fact that the men knew nothing about the presence of the explosive in the cargo saved them from being panic struck. Also Parton's entirely calm manner had its effect on them, and they quickly set about carrying out his orders.

Parton hurried up the companionway, and even as his feet touched the level of the deck he heard a shout which meant that his warning would be unnecessary. There were some thin curls of smoke coming from the main hatch and these had been discovered by the men. A great cry of "Fire" was raised and taken up by every man on board. The mate, at first incredulous, then quickly convinced as the small spirals of smoke were pointed out to him, gave orders quickly. He paid no attention to Parton, who was hurrying forward toward the hatch by which he must reach the portion of the hold in which his diamonds were hidden. But even as he hastened, while the mate was giving rapid orders and the men were in a frenzy of haste in preparing the boats for lowering, the small spirals of smoke amidships changed to small tongues of flame. These ran up the tarred tackle which hung about the base of the main mast, and, springing upwards with almost inconceivable rapidity, caught the canvas. Tinder could not have been more eager to offer itself in sac-

rifice to the fire fiend than was the canvas of the *Lydia Skolfeld*. In less time than it would have taken Parton to have reached the forward hatch had he not paused in fascinated terror at sight of the leaping flames there on the main mast, the way was closed to him. A roaring wall of flame shut him off from the possibility of reaching the hold in which his treasure was concealed.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE LAST OF THE "LYDIA"

One trouble with disaster on the sea is that there ain't no real good place to run to.—*The Logbook of the Lydia.*

Human misfortune cannot present a more terrifying aspect than when it comes in the form of fire at sea, particularly if it be a wooden ship which is overtaken by the disaster. In such a craft, all planks and timbers above the water line, most of them resinous by nature, have been rendered doubly inflammable by tar, paint and oil; the delicate upper-works of seasoned spars, tarred tackle and cotton sail cloth, seem to be especially designed to feed the devouring element, and the means of combating a conflagration are, of necessity, crude and imperfect. On vessels iron hulled, even if they be rigged with wooden spars and the usual multiplicity of quick burning tackle, there may be some possibility of arresting the spread of the flames, with a fighting hope of keeping them in check until port is reached or succor appears in the form of some passing craft. But on a wooden ship, built with what seems to be, in such circumstances, especial care to make her a floating tinderbox, and with no power to man the pumps except the muscles of the panic stricken crew, no such chance exists. If is added to the general peril of the persons on board of such a craft the danger, as a detail, of the explosion of tons of some high power chemical

mixture, as was the case on the *Lydia Skolfeld*, the chance of saving the ship, or even of escaping with one's life, if delay for a single moment is tolerated, becomes very small indeed.

The fire barrier amidships cut the habitable portion of the *Lydia Skolfeld* in two—a roaring veil of flame which almost prevented Parton from even seeing the group of wildly excited men who were gathered forward about the mate, whose loud, excited orders concerning the lowering of the boats Parton could plainly hear above the sullen roaring of the flames. Whether or not the mate was aware of the dangerous quality of that dozen or two of cases which were stowed amidships and which were entered on the ship's manifest as "chemicals," Parton did not know; but that there was wild fright in the tones in which the orders were given and wild haste in the way in which the men obeyed him, there could be no doubt whatever. No attention at all was paid to the passenger who stood aft, before the cabin companionway, nor, later, to the men who ran out from the cabin and joined him there. This isolated trio gazed with horror at the great fluttering flags of flame which now held the places occupied a few moments before by bellying canvas and fluttering hunting. Even as Parton watched the hurrying figures forward through the smother of the smoke and the flashing of the fire, he saw that they had rescued the boats which had been lashed amidships, and lowered them. As he looked he saw them tumble desperately over the ship's side and into them.

At the stern of the *Lydia Skolfeld* were overhanging timbers from which the "small boat" hung

when she lay in port, but one of the crew's first duties after she had put to sea had been to take the little craft aboard and house her on the cabin roof, just abaft the mizzenmast. She was canvas wrapped and closely lashed. Parton presumed that the oars had been placed beneath her thwarts before she had been overturned and housed. He called to the two men to help him right her and get her overboard. They worked with a will, and soon had her swinging from the ship's low stern. Both men were in her as Parton rushed below to get the Captain, but even as he dashed down the companionway, a change of wind brought a blinding gust of smoke and a sheet of flame across the narrow door which made it difficult and even dangerous for him to enter; but he shielded his face and his eyes as well as he could with his arm, and plunged through the hot swirl. In the cabin there was no flame yet; but the air had become so thick and foul with smoke that he could scarcely see, and every breath filled his lungs with a choking, stinging vapor rather than with air.

The men had only partially dressed the Captain, and, so far as Parton could judge from the hasty inspection of him which was possible in the circumstances, he had become almost wholly lifeless. There was now none of the babbling talk which had become such an uncanny feature of his prostration. The labored breathing which had alternately raised and lowered his great chest during the days that had passed since he was stricken had, apparently, ceased. When Parton placed his arms about him, his body seemed limp and lifeless, and Parton shuddered as the thought came to him that the shock had killed

him, and that as he hurried from the cabin with him he was bearing in his arms a corpse.

When he reached the deck he was greeted by a blinding swirl of smoke, and red tongues of flame curled toward him through the murk threateningly. He felt quick flashes over his face, and he knew that they meant the burning of his newly grown beard, and his moustache and his eyebrows. The raised collar of his pea-jacket and the cap which was pulled firmly down over his ears saved the hair upon the back and the top of his head. He was nearly blinded and the onslaught of the smoke made his eyes smart with an almost intolerable pain. For a second he was confused. He scarcely knew in which direction lay the vessel's stern. And even when he had reached it, his state seemed scarcely better, for the low-lying smoke mass so blinded him that he could not have located the boat even if the two sailors in her had been brave enough to keep her close to the blazing menace of the ship. Parton hesitated only for a moment. He laid the Captain down upon the deck, then he wrenched the three gratings from the deck about the wheel. From the thwarts about the foot of the mizzenmast he desperately caught a line, not stopping even to unlatch it from the thwart. He made the free end of it fast to the three gratings, passing it through their bars, and tying a most unseamanlike knot to secure it on the last one of the three. Then he cast them overboard. By the time he had done this he could see scarcely at all, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he found the Captain where he had placed him on the deck. The burning in his lungs, caused by the smoke which he had inhaled, caused a constant and

convulsive coughing, which weakened him and racked his whole frame so severely that he could barely stagger to the rail with the burden of the Captain's body in his arms. The thought was in his mind that if it had been three feet farther away he would never have reached it at all. Once there, he precipitated himself from the ship with no definite effort at a spring. It was a mere random plunge, but it was all that he was capable of.

For a second he found himself, still with the Captain clasped tightly in his arms, wholly immersed in the cool waters of the ocean. When he rose to the surface, his head struck what he knew must be one of the floating gratings which he had thrown overboard. The ducking in the cool water had cleared his wits somewhat, and with infinite difficulty he managed to roll the Captain's inert body over until it rested on the gratings. Then he made it fast there temporarily by putting about it a half hitch of the doubled line. The smoke pall was heavy on him at the surface, and he had much difficulty in sufficiently controlling his nerves and muscles to make it possible for him to get his clasp knife from his pocket with one hand, while with the other he held to the grating, which, rising and falling on the long swell of the Atlantic, seemed to intelligently endeavor to elude him.

But at last the line which attached the gratings to the burning ship was severed, and, with slow and painful strokes, he swam, trying to push the raft to windward, so that it would be out of that dreadful pall of stifling smoke. A dozen times he had to duck his head beneath the water to ease his burning eyes. A dozen times he feared that he had lost the

sense of direction, and was pushing the floating gratings nearer to instead of farther away from the burning vessel.

Bits of sail and tackle flew blazing through the air and fell on him or around him, hissing spitefully as they were afterwards extinguished by the water of the sea. More than once with infinite effort he thrust some flaming thing away from the prostrate and insensate body of the Captain, adding the pain of scorched and blistered hands to the other discomforts of his position as he did so. Once he saw falling toward the unconscious man a blazing piece of spar big enough and heavy enough to have bruised him badly, even if it had not been certain to burn him if it struck him. How he did it he did not know, but he literally leaped from the water and caught it with both hands, holding tight to its cruel, burning middle until he had diverted it from the body of the prostrate man and sent it plunging into the sea, where it disappeared with a hiss a few feet from him. A moment later it bobbed up again, steaming and charred and blackened, and he reached for it with his raw and throbbing hands to add it to the tiny raft which must support them both until help came or endurance ended.

It seemed to him at last that he must be swimming in the very course of the smoke which streamed with the wind from the blazing vessel, but still he feared that if he changed his course he would take himself and his charge back so near to the blazing wreck that they would be certain to be struck by falling spars or otherwise involved in the general destruction of the vessel, which would come with the explosion. The tremendous detonation which

would come when the fire reached the Humberite, he expected at every moment. If it should occur while they were near to the ship, he knew that their escape would be practically out of the question. He struggled desperately to make his raft move more rapidly away. Weariness was telling on him. He tried to shout, but could not.

In the very midst of this crisis he heard cries close at hand, and there popped out of the smoke close to him one of the ship's boats. It was the one of which the mate had taken command. He caught at the oar which was nearest to him. It was his movement in doing this that called the attention of the men to the floating gratings which held the Captain, and which Parton pushed. The boat was shooting past him as he caught this oar. The man whose hands were on it and the mate saw him and recognized him at the same moment. The man stared in stupid amazement. The mate struck viciously at his hand with a long boat hook with which he was fending wreckage away from the bows, but did not hit him. Not an articulate sound was uttered on either side. The man who held the oar was so surprised that he loosed his hold of it and it was left floating in Parton's hands. The boat shot through the smoke and out of sight. After it had passed Parton heard a stream of oaths, which he knew were uttered by the mate and which struggled back to him through the thick air, gradually becoming less and less distinct as the distance between him and the boat became greater.

Perhaps it was anger at his inhuman treatment by the mate who had thus abandoned them; perhaps it was the aid which he got from the oar, which he

swung around so that it rested beneath his chin—at any rate, Parton put forth new energy and, a moment later, emerged himself from the smoke with a suddenness which made him feel as if he had been actually thrown out of it with speed.

The relief to his burning lungs and streaming, smarting eyes was not immediate. The eyes he relieved somewhat by ducking his head beneath the water with them open, but it was several moments before pure air seemed to replace the acrid, irritating smoke-laden smother which he had drawn into his lungs.

As he gazed about him he was surprised to find that he was much farther from the ship than he had thought. Except when some swell raised him he could not see the *Lydia* herself at all; but only the great, irregular mass of smoke which streamed from her. When a swell raised him so that he could see her hull, he realized how rapid and complete had been the work of the flames. Her upper-works were in complete ruins. The stumps of her masts alone remained standing. He regarded the smoking wreck with a terrified interest which made him for the moment forget his own present and imminent peril and the pitiable condition of the man whom he had rescued from the blazing ship, only, perhaps, to reserve him for a more lingering if less dreadful death, by slow starvation or the warring of the waves. As he cast his eyes about the swelling surface of the sea he caught occasional glimpses of the boat which had just passed him by so cruelly. But, at first there were no indications of the smaller boat which he had helped to launch from the stern of the ship, and which he had planned to have take him

and the Captain off. His heart was filled with a sickening dread of the possibility of being left alone there with the senseless sick man, with nothing to look forward to except inevitable death at no distant hour. He rose up in the water by a movement of the legs which is familiar to all swimmers, known as treading water, and shook his fist at the mate's boat and cursed him as it slid over the crest of a swell.

As he did so he heard from behind him a faint halloo. Turning, to his inexpressible relief, he saw the small boat with the two sailors in it, waving their hands to him, still close by the ship, but evidently trying to encourage him. Even as he looked the boat sank out of sight in one of the long valleys of the sea; but as it did so, he could see that the men had bent to their oars and were speeding it in his direction as rapidly as they could.

But, an instant later, even the joy which he felt at this sight was eclipsed by an instantly overwhelming amazement. From the gratings to which he had lashed the apparently inanimate form of the Captain came articulate words, intelligently connected. In a high, weak voice, not exactly like the Captain's old, sturdy tones, but still unmistakably his own, he heard:

"Well! By John Quincy Adams! There goes th' Lyddy!"

Almost simultaneously with the speaking of the words, there rolled across the water a dull, muffled report, as of the firing of a great gun under tons of earth, or the bursting of a blast in a mine indistinctly heard above ground. And, accompanying it, there came a blast of hot, smoke-tainted air, so severe that it struck Parton on the face and chest as might a fist

blow, and left him almost breathless. A moment later a great swell, much larger than the regular rhythmic ocean undulations on which he had risen and fallen ever since he had been in the water, overtook him and almost overwhelmed him. As he rose, sputtering, above it, he realized that the Humberite had done its work, and that the *Lydia Skolfeld*, with the fortune for which he had struggled so arduously in South Africa, and to retain possession of which he had begun his nightmare flight from London, was no more.

It dazed him.

A moment later he was recalled to the affairs of the passing moment by the sound of a hoarse, choking sob from the Captain's grating. Then there came the words, in the strange voice which signalled the old man's marvellous recovery of the power of intelligent speech:

"Good-bye, *Lyddy!* Good-bye, old girl!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

ADRIFT

The cruellest thing that ever happened to a thirsty man was to be set a-floatin' on salt water.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

There was something so unexpected, so startling, so uncanny, both in the fact that the Captain could speak and in the strange, unnatural voice in which the words were uttered, that Parton, dazed as he was by the dreadful happenings of the past few hours; heartsick as he was over this last trick which Fate had played him by blowing up the *Lydia Skolfeld* and his diamonds with her; weak and weary as he was from the combined effects of smoke sickness and great strain in both nerves and muscles, almost lost his hold upon both the oar which supported his chin and the floating grating to which the Captain's still inert body was lashed. He almost cried out in his amazement; but restrained himself, even in the excitement of the emergency, fearing the effect upon the strangely recovered man. A ripple from the swell upon which they were being slowly lifted caught him as his lips were parted, and what he had intended to say became a hopeless sputter. The Captain's eyes were turned in his direction.

"Well," he drawled, "well, Mr. Parton, guess you're gettin' all the bathin' that even *you* need—dirty as you be. But be careful not to let the mate see you swimmin' around here for pleasure. It'll

make him think that you've got bangles on your toes that you're a-tryin' to hide from him!"

The reaction was instantaneous and great. Parton, who had been, a moment before, filled with the gloomiest forebodings, burst into an almost hysterical laugh. It shook him, convulsed him, almost made him lose his hold a dozen times before he finally conquered it.

"Well, b' John Quincy Adams!" said the Captain's new voice, jerkily, "I'm glad you've found something out here to sea to make you happy. There's nothin' like lookin' on th' right side o' things. I don't seem to see th' joke quite so plain as you appear to. Can't you let a feller in? I'm feelin' kind o' glum, myself. It's just a leetle damp. I never *was* partial to mid-ocean sport on a deck gratin'-that is, when th' deck gratin's floatin' off by itself, with nothin' else left of th' ship I've been a-sailin' on."

Parton was still almost speechless from surprise. There could be no doubt that the kindly philosopher who had done so much to ease his troubles during the days on the *Lydia Skolfeld* had been restored to something at least approximating his normal mental condition in some miraculous way. He did not, of course, understand how this had come about or why; but could only dimly guess that the succession of shocks beginning with the discovery of smoke in the cabin of the ship and culminating in his dramatic rescue from the burning craft by the wild plunge through fire and smoke in the arms of the muscular young Englishman, the great physical reaction which had come with the wild plunge into the cold waters of the sea, and the terrific, sudden, mental agony which had been thrust through the quivering

tissues of his brain by the sight of the destruction of his ship, had brought about one of those mysterious alterations in his condition with which the annals of psycho-physiology are filled, but which seem little less than miraculous to the lay mind. They had caused the breaking and immediate absorption of the clot which had been pressing on the Captain's brain.

Parton tried to reply to the Captain, but he could not. After a moment of absolute silence he again burst into another unnatural cackle of laughter. It was evident that when the Captain spoke again, the physical effort of forcing the words from his lips was considerable; but there was none of that hesitation and incoherence which had marked his speech for so many days.

"I ain't all right yet, Mr. Parton," he said. "I ain't any John near all right! But I guess I'm better. Somethin' funny's been the matter with me, an' I guess I'm gettin' over it some. I got a joke on you, anyway, by Quincy! I got a good joke on you. You be'n a-thinkin' that I hadn't no sense these last days. Had jest as much sense as you had—only trouble was I couldn't talk about it. I've often thought some Adams folks would be better off if they couldn't talk; but I never tried it before, myself. I don't recommend it as a means of havin' fun. As an amusement it ain't to be compared to some things that I c'n think of—not to be compared, by John Quincy Adams!"

The strange voice in which the old man delivered these philosophical reflections was, just then, smothered by an over-rolling swell. He sputtered for a moment afterwards. Then he said:

"We're in pretty John bad shape, by Quincy!"

Pretty Adams bad shape, when you come to re'lly think about it; but that ain't what we want to think about. We don't want to think about what bad shape we're in—what we want to think about is what good shape we're *goin'* to be in when we git out o' the bad shape that we *are* in. Then we want to figger out jest how we're a-goin' to arrange that matter. I guess you'll have to do most of the thinkin'. Th' wheels in *my* head seem to want greasin' an' want it mighty bad. An' grease is skeerce out here. Jest you do th' thinkin', an' I'll keep quiet for a while. Am I tight lashed onto this—this here ocean grayhound that I'm a-ridin'?"

"Yes," said Parton.

"That's good," remarked the Captain, with the queer tones growing a little faint. "That's good, because I'm—I'm—a-goin'—to—to faint away."

Which Parton knew that he had done, by the expression and color of the face a moment later, when the swell lifted him.

The water of the North Atlantic in which Parton was more or less completely submerged for many dread succeeding hours, was what the bathers at an ocean resort would call pleasantly warm for bathing purposes. The water at the surface of the sea in mid ocean in summer is frequently of as high a temperature as 55 degrees at noonday, as many a novice in such matters has learned to his surprise. But this high temperature only extends a few feet below the surface. So, while Parton's hands dabbled in sea water of a pleasant warmth, and while against his cheek there blew a breeze so soft and agreeable in its hints of stored sunshine that it would have come to the voyager on a ship's deck with a distinctly

pleasant ardor, yet a chill was creeping upward from his more deeply submerged feet and legs, which worried him.

Once in a while, as he paddled as energetically as he felt was safe, considering the undoubted necessity for husbanding his strength, he felt certain that he could hear half-smothered mutterings from the grating to which the old man was lashed; but he was careful not to reply to them for fear that he would thus consume what little strength he had left, and he was becoming unpleasantly conscious that that little was getting alarmingly less with the lapse of time.

With great exertion he prepared for what he recognized was the inevitable. He so arranged the partly burned spar and some other bits of wreckage which he had gathered in, that the Captain's body was supported at least six inches higher out of the water than it had been, and bound all the pieces of the old man's frail support together more firmly with the rope, leaving a loop of it trailing backwards in which he intended to firmly lash himself before darkness settled down.

Strange and terrifying thoughts struggled to keep a place in his mind, from which he constantly endeavored to drive them out. It was hard for him to avoid constant consideration of his desperate plight; but he manfully strove to put all such reflections away from him, fearing that if he once allowed them to gain a real hold in his brain, they would overcome all other mental arguments and weaken him by proving to him that he was utterly beyond rescue —a state of affairs which he was, wisely, anxious to avoid.

It was not very long before he found that he must begin systematically to force his mind away from his present distress if he wished to keep his body afloat. Whenever the thought flashed across his mind that his case was hopeless—and such thoughts were reasonable and bound to intrude upon him—there came into his fingers an almost uncontrollable desire to loose their hold on the frail support which was within their grasp; and there came into his body—apparently into every part of it from the soles of his feet to the top of his head, and definitely and in detail including all the many different portions of it, which are, by habit, separated in the location of sensation—a desire to relax.

At the same time that this desire was strongest in his body, the knowledge of what it would mean was strongest in his mind. He felt certain that if he relaxed, he would lose his hold upon the slats of the grating, and, throwing up his arms, sink peacefully and pleasantly into the sea. There were moments when he felt convinced that this would not be so bad a plan; but before he yielded to their temptation, he invariably thought about the old man who was bound there on the grating and who was certain to perish in his helplessness if he, Parton, did not keep courage. The fact that it would bring his own death did not seem important to him.

He loosened one set of stiffened fingers after the other, and gazed with salt-blurred eyes at them. His hands had wrinkled in the salt water as a laundress's are wrinkled by her suds. But it was difficult to keep his mind upon the present. Indeed, even this recollection of the laundress brought memories of the past. He recalled drawing water for his

mother's laundress when he was a boy, and they were out at a country place in Surrey. Once he was wallopped for teasing her. He remembered the place where he had committed this grave crime very well. It was just back of the low, rambling, Gothic house, and there was a well there. The pump on it was of some patent variety which he, as a child, found hard to master. Finally, however, he had discovered that he had but to let the handle rise gradually of itself and he would be spared the great strain of pushing it up—a strain which was almost more than his tiny bones and muscles could bear. He could remember, as he floated there, two-thirds submerged in the surging salt-tainted swells of the North Atlantic, how pleasantly that other water had gushed from the iron spout of that patent pump. He remembered that there was a little, upstanding knob on the iron spout, which was designed to hold the bail of any pail which might be hung upon it, thus preventing the pail from slipping to the wooden platform before the pump. And as the water gushed and burbled into the pail!—*that water was fresh!*

He realized for the first time that he was thirsty!

Instantly he knew that he had been attacked by the worst of all the many enemies that might seek to destroy him there at sea. The fatigue which had made his every bone and muscle cry out in pain for a repose which he knew was utterly impossible was nothing now. The continually increasing cold which was creeping upward from his feet was nothing. The danger that the wind might rise and that the swells on which he rose and fell so easily would be capped by overwhelming, beating, stifling crests of broken sea and foam was nothing. The danger that he

might lose consciousness and, failing to keep his lungs sufficiently filled with air to provide enough buoyancy to float his dangling body, sink, was nothing. The indefinite longing in his stomach for solid food was nothing.

But the craving for fresh water, as he floated there in that vast, illimitable wilderness of liquid salt—was everything!

He tried to thrust the thought of thirst away, but could not. From time to time traces of ocean brine found their way into his mouth, no matter how he tried to keep it tightly closed. In all his life he had never known so maddening a sensation. Its discomforts increased with sickening rapidity.

It was hard for him to even guess at the hour from his rare and fleeting glimpses of the sinking sun, and, after he had manœuvred arduously to get at his watch, he found that it had stopped. Probably the salt water had penetrated through the joints of its cases, or, at some time during the quick work on shipboard, it had been bruised and damaged. But he knew from the fading daylight that night would soon be on him—night when, even if some ship should pass close to him, there would be almost no possibility that he would be discovered and picked up. His increasing weariness and weakness was becoming so great that he had small hope of being able to support himself until daylight should come again. He was, he reflected, quite at the mercy of any increasing weakness which might come upon him. He held to the gratings only by his hands, and when they should so weaken that they could no longer keep their light grip, the end would come at once. He considered the idea of lashing himself to the grating

so that the slipping of his hands would not mean that; but, testing it, he found that a very little further pressure would submerge it, and that, therefore, such an effort at self-salvation would not only not avail him, but would also drown the Captain. He abandoned the idea.

It may be that, as they say, self-preservation is the first law of nature; but still I cannot believe that less than a sizable majority of young men would have decided other than Parton did. He felt no hesitation in arriving at his resolution to hang on as long as he could without jeopardizing the Captain's support, and then to let go and slip down into the deep as quietly as he could. He wondered if he should struggle when the time came for this final cessation of resistance against the Fate that pursued him with such apparent relentlessness. He did not feel at all certain that he would be able to resist the final impulse to fight death in case there remained in him strength enough to make it possible. He tried to summon vitality enough to enable him to rise in the water so that he could peer into the face of the silent sailor, but found it impossible. Even when he tried to shout to him—he had a strangely sentimental desire to bid the old man farewell—he had to give the effort over.

His breath was coming in quick, short gasps. It had been hours since he had been able to really fill his lungs with a long, deep inspiration. His lips began to crack from the action of the salt water and the fever of the excitement into which the events of the day had plunged him. He knew, too, that this fever was increasing, for he continually felt warmer, whereas, not long ago, he had been oppressed by a

steadily increasing chilliness. That the end of his endurance could not be far away he was convinced because of several symptoms which he definitely felt, but still could scarcely recognize as personal.

His hands had become so stiffened that when there was a slight additional strain brought upon him by the heaving of a wave, he felt his fingers slip, each time, a little nearer to the corner of the grating, and there was no power in them to loosen and take a new and firmer hold.

He felt, too, that his mind was wandering. Another attempt to rouse the Captain with a shout resulted in the emission of nothing louder than a husky whisper. His consciousness, he reflected, did not seem to be slipping from him; on the contrary, it was continually becoming more acute; but he felt sure that it was becoming deranged. He hovered strangely in that borderland which lies between sanity and delirium. He knew that many of the thoughts which flitted through his mind were vagaries; but it was, at times, difficult to tell which were facts and which were fancies. Once or twice he found himself trying to force what seemed to be a secondary mind to believe that he was again lying out upon the veldt in Africa, and that the ocean and the horrors which had recently occurred upon it were the dream; only, a moment later, to believe that he was really not upon the sea and that the undulating plain which seemed to stretch around him was the actuality. He tried to stop the effort to separate the fact from fancy; but he could not. A dozen times he plainly saw the face of his mother bending over him, heard the pleasant tones of her musical voice as they had sounded when he was a child half sleeping in his

crib, and felt the gentle touch of her cool and loving fingers on his brow—only to be convinced a moment later that the voice was the rippling of the water against the Captain's grating; that the face was a vision in which the stars (now sharp points of radiance against the deep blue of the evening sky) were the eyes; that the touch of her cool hand was the lapping of some little wavelet against the fevered skin of his parched face.

Over and over again these contorted impressions changed and re-changed; whatever was most distinct in his mind ever seeming to be fancy, and what seemed farthest from the truth to be the fact.

By and by his mother's face gave way to another vision—not less sweet to him—one of Norah.

For a long time he saw this sight, and it was good to look upon. His tired limbs had ceased to ache. In some way he half turned in the water, so that his eyes gazed more directly upward, and thus, floating almost upon his back, he felt that the tendency to sink seemed less. But this did not matter much to him. At about this time there was an unaccountable sensation, first of pain and then of delicious freedom from it, in his right wrist; but he paid small attention to it. He did not realize that one of the lines which bound the Captain upon the raft had loosened and had drifted backward in a loop which had caught him beneath the shoulders and was helping to support him—that he had been unconsciously and loosely lashed to the improvised raft in such a way that the additional strain of his weight was as cunningly swung from its middle as if the ropes had been ingeniously adjusted to accomplish that result. That, as he had turned, his wrist, which had been be-

tween one of the spars and the grating, had been disjointed by the strain, he did not for a moment imagine. The pain only lasted for an instant, and then he forgot that he had a hand or that there was a wrist connecting it to the arm above.

After he had turned his face was less frequently splashed by the waves, and the face of Norah swung upward as his line of vision was shifted to the deep, summer-night sky. He did not become wholly unconscious; but he must have been near to it. The face of Norah swung in the dark vault above him, quite as his set eyes swung in answer to the motion of the sea.

All effort to keep himself afloat ceased in him. He was surprised because he did not sink; but not energetically so. It seemed to matter very little to him whether he did or not. He dimly felt that the waves which had so gently cradled him were becoming more energetic in their movement. The real circumstances which had placed him where he was slipped from his mind, although the consciousness that the Captain was ill and was close by him and helpless did not leave him.

Gradually he felt that some strange change must be occurring in the old man's condition, for he thought that he could hear his heart beat. That seemed most extraordinary, and he tried to speak to him, but he could not. And he was scarcely disappointed when he found that such effort was wholly useless, although his endeavor had been earnest. Once or twice it seemed to him that that strange beating of the Captain's heart was growing louder; but he was not curious about it. He felt a mild

wonder at this pathological marvel, but that was all. He could not fix his mind upon it.

Then he heard her voice. It was not quite as musical and pleasant as it had been there at the house in London or in that magic cab; but he was sure that it was her voice. Also it called him "Parton," many times, and he wondered at the omission of the "Mister." It was pleasant to have her leave it out—it seemed to indicate a charming comradry between them; but he would have preferred to have her call him by his first name—Henry.

Again a wave slowly shifted his position, and he could clearly see her face. She was singing in an astonishingly loud and somewhat harsh monotone, which rose and fell strangely and was very penetrating. The whole air seemed to vibrate with the greatness of the sound. As he idly gazed across between the waves—for now, every moment or two, a wave rose between the face and his—it seemed to become strangely dark of countenance, and the face grew very, very large, and was no longer hers.

Larger and larger grew that face, and there was a change about the eyes. One of them changed from the beautiful blue which he so well remembered, and became a vivid, brilliant green. The other changed to gleaming red, and they rose rapidly, as if they had been some distance off from him and were now approaching swiftly.

He heard a voice. It was not her voice that seemed to come to him; but many voices—and there seemed to be among them a strange confusion of tongues.

The face loomed larger on the low edge of the water—grew terrifyingly, overwhelmingly large, and

the many voices assailed his ears with sound which was strangely and almost stupefyingly interrupted by three loud, quick, hoarse screams, such as he could not remember ever having heard a human being emit before, although there was a certain familiarity about the vast noise, too, which seemed to take him back to the days when he had been voyaging between South Africa and England, and the ship had been passing through a fog.

There could be no doubt now that the face was rushing at him with a bewildering swiftness and with an even more bewildering and tremendous increase in size as it came nearer to him. And there was the sound of swirling, hurrying, seething water. Then the face became very dark indeed, and all the features blurred and disappeared except those great red and green eyes. The green eye suddenly vanished as if in a most gigantic wink. The face passed him with a confusing rush of waters, and a strange hissing as of steam. Then a great wave rolled quite over him, and, for a second, brought him back to sense again. His conscious moment was not long, but it was not too brief for him to realize that the face had been a great steamer's bow which had swept past him, and that the eyes had been the port and starboard lights; that the great voice had been the steamer's siren whistle, and that the lesser murmurings had been shoutings from her deck.

How long afterwards it was that he felt strong arms reach under him and lift him into a ship's boat, while other willing hands cut the Captain loose and took him in, he never felt certain from his own impressions. The people on the ship, who had seen the floating gratings and their human freight, told

him later that it was not more than a few moments. He lost consciousness—even that disordered semi-delirious consciousness which had changed vivid actualities into puzzling apparitions.

When he awoke the sun was shining into a snug stateroom on the steamship *Paris*. He was comfortably ensconced in a wide berth, with deliciously clean, soft blankets wrapped around him. There was, standing at his side, the ship's doctor in his natty uniform, and, as Parton's eyes gradually grew to look intelligently upon the scene, his brain slowly awoke to the knowledge that he had been picked up by a steamship in mid-ocean.

He gazed inquiringly at the ship's doctor, who returned his puzzled stare with a good-natured grin and a pleasant but somewhat disconcerting order not to tire himself by trying to talk. Then, as he looked into the doctor's eyes inquisitorily, he saw them shift quickly toward the foot of the berth, and caught a fleeting glimpse of a graceful, skirted figure which had been standing there; but which quickly disappeared through the cabin door. There was a dim impression in his mind that this figure was familiar to him and resembled, greatly, that of the woman he loved; but he realized that he had been ill, and decided that he was, probably, still delirious. He made no attempt to comment on it; but turned over and closed his eyes with that pleasant sensation which comes to all of us when we know that we are about to fall into a restful slumber in a safe and comfortable spot. He had small curiosity about anything just then. He could feel that his right arm was in splints, but it did not interest him particularly. He only wished to go to sleep.

He heard the doctor say to him that Captain Burgee was better and he was very glad to know it; but he did not feel it necessary to make the effort which an answer would require. Only one thing had seemed important enough to displace that longing for slumber—that had been the figure which had seemed so strangely like that of the woman he loved; but, of course, it could not have been her figure, and, therefore, it was not worth bothering about.

The last dim impression that fell unimportantly upon his mind was that some one had stuck a red head into the cabin door and said in a loud whisper to the doctor:

“The Captain’s compliments, sir, and would you step on deck, sir?”

Then he felt a delicious thrill of restfulness spread through his body. It almost seemed as if the ship must share it, for, as it stole over him, there came that indescribable thrill which penetrates to every part of a steamship, when her engines’ speed is reduced. He dreamily realized that the throbbing of her screw became less frequent in its pulsations and finally stopped. Then he went to sleep, to dream pleasant dreams about the girl he loved, in which the nightmare of his flight from London, of his struggles with the mate upon the *Lydia*, of the wreck of that gallant barkentine and his subsequent escape with her helpless Captain played no part; but through which there ran, instead, a delicious monotone as of *her* voice; in which there were dim, dream-built and delightful visions of *her* face; and through which and in which there was no hint of unpleasantness or pain; but of peace, and joy, and restfulness and—*Her!*

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

NORAH

**God saw a woman in a sick room. He copied her and made—an angel!—
*The Logbook of the Lyddy.***

It was not until the doctor came into his room the next afternoon that Parton really awoke in his calm and normal senses. The doctor was a good-natured young man, somewhat proud of the prominence with the reporters which his intimate knowledge of the case of the castaways would give to him.

"Do you think you feel strong enough to talk to some newspaper men?" he asked Parton, after he had answered some very natural questions, most of them about the Captain, who, it seemed, was in another room and doing well. "I told them that I thought you would be able to see them; but that you should, of course, do quite as you pleased about it."

Unpleasant thoughts were hammering in Parton's mind. Of course the fact that he was a shipwrecked man would make him more or less a subject of public gossip. He had reason to believe that his step-father would have had the New York police notified of the fact that he was "wanted" for taking the diamonds away with him, and they would be on the lookout for any man travelling under the name of Henry Parton. Whether he had given this name to the ship's officers when he came partially to himself after the rescue, or how much of his story, if any, he

had revealed during the days of his delirium, he did not know. Everything that had occurred since he had been on the *Paris* came to his mind so vaguely that he could not be at all sure of his memory. He must have shown his perplexity in his face, for the doctor, whose pleasant grin appeared to be perpetual, expanded it a little and remarked:

"Now one of the things that you must not do is to worry about anything. If you don't want to see those wild barbarians, you needn't. Just say the word and I'll tell them that you're too weak to see anybody, and I'll have you taken away from the ship with never a word to any of them. You'll have to go to the hospital for a little, I'm thinking, anyway, Mr.—Mr.—"

He was evidently waiting for a helping word.

"I think I should be glad not to see the press men," said Parton, without supplying it. Then he hesitated for a moment. "I wish you would tell me what I have said since I have been on the steamer," he finally stammered. "I have a conviction that I have not only been unconscious for a part of the time; but that I have been delirious for a part of the time. I remember some strange fancies that were in my mind just before you picked me up; but I have practically no memory of having been brought on board. For instance—as your ship was bearing down on me, I thought her bow was a vast face."

He was speaking very quietly and there was a flash of quick sympathy in the doctor's eyes as he looked at him.

"I thought it was the face of my mother magnified," said Parton, after a brief pause.

"I fancied that you thought you had seen her,"

said the doctor. "As a matter of fact I scarcely cared to listen to you, after I had heard about the sad circumstances which must, of course, have made that bit of delirium doubly and painfully impressive to you."

"What do you mean?" asked Parton.

"Why—after I had heard about her recent death," said the doctor. "You know you have persistently mistaken Miss—"

Here the doctor stopped and bit his lip.

"What were you saying?" asked Parton, evidently puzzled.

"You have persistently mistaken a lady passenger, who has been good enough to help in nursing you, for—your late mother," said the doctor. I guess you've passed the worst stage of your trouble now, though, and I'm glad to congratulate you."

"Yes, don't worry about me now," said Parton, feeling sicker in mind than in body. I fancy that I'll be all right as soon as I can find a chance to rest up a bit and bring my strength back—don't you?"

"I think so," said the doctor. "Really there isn't a doubt about it. But it will be four or five weeks before you will be able to use your hand again."

"I don't know what's the matter with it," said Parton, with a feeble grin. "When I first came to myself I saw that it was bandaged, and, of course, I have been conscious that it has been aching like the devil; but I can't clearly remember having hurt it. Still there seems to be some recollection of a strain upon it, or some accident to it."

"Well, you *must* have had a time!" said the doctor. "When our men went out to you, they found that you had shoved your wrist through the rope which

held your companion to the grating on which he was lashed—apparently in order to tighten it. If you had not done so, he probably would have been washed away, and you, certainly, would have lost your hold and been drowned. For you were practically unconscious when we picked you up, and could have done nothing to help either yourself or him. Your wrist is broken, Mr.—Mr.—”

The doctor's hesitation puzzled Parton. He also noticed that the doctor eyed him keenly as he paused.

“ Well,” said the doctor, in explanation of it, “ you see that the mention of your name has been the thing which has bothered you more than anything else since you have been on board. Even Miss—Miss MacFarren has never called you by your last name since the first time she saw you after you had come out of your first period of unconsciousness. It seemed dangerous to do it. It excited you strangely. But when she called you by your first name you were, apparently, pleased.”

And something excited him strangely then—so strangely that the doctor was evidently startled by it. He put his hand out quickly to Parton's shoulder in order to prevent him from rising, and said, hurriedly:

“ Now—now—you mustn't lean on your broken wrist, you know!”

But Parton had half risen in his berth.

“ Who did you say?” he demanded, with a look of amazed wonder on his face.

“ Why, Miss MacFarren,” said the doctor.

“ Is she on board this ship?” asked Parton with a queer, weak voice.

“ Of course,” said the doctor, regarding him curi-

ously. " You don't mean to tell me that you haven't recognized her at all!"

" Do you mean Miss Norah MacFarren? " asked Parton, staring at the doctor with an expression of dazed astonishment.

" Exactly, " said the doctor. " Miss Norah MacFarren. Of course she is on the ship. Hasn't she been nursing you and looking after you ever since she found out the next morning who it was that we had picked up? "

Parton was too astounded to speak.

Finally he broke into a half hysterical laugh.

" Then it has not *all* been fancy? " he said.

" Did you think it had been? " asked the doctor.

" I believed that the memory of it was of a kind with the memory of a good many other strange notions I have had since I have been here, " said Parton. " I—I fancy I believed it to be too good to be true. How upon earth did she happen to be here? "

" You'll have to ask her that, " said the doctor. " Of course I don't know. " He grinned a little. " You—you didn't seem to be—exactly *sorry* that she was here! "

" Then were all the things which are in my mind—did they—how have I been acting toward her? " asked Parton, reddening.

" Well, " said the doctor, slowly, and with a twinkle in his eye, " you have spoken your mind very freely to her. "

" How do you mean? " asked Parton, nervously.

" Oh, in the matter of—of telling her about your—your step-brotherly affection for her, you know! " said the doctor.

Parton's face was of the color of the stripes in the

Flag of the Free. He did not smile, although the doctor's broad grin ought to have been contagious. But after a moment's pause, evidently feeling sympathy for his patient's distress, the doctor said, happily:

"I don't believe you had better worry about it any more than you can help. I shouldn't feel *too* badly about it, if I were you. It might put you back in getting well, you know, and—and besides, she—she seemed to like it, you know!"

Parton gazed at him in bewilderment. He was about to make this oral when a tapping at the stateroom door was heard. The doctor opened it, and admitted Norah MacFarren.

With much greater consideration than could have been reasonably expected of him, he then hurried away.

"You can look after him for a while, Miss MacFarren," he said. "I'll be down again directly."

As his foot was advanced above the raised sill of the stateroom door, he added:

"He's quite conscious and rational now, and, therefore, very anxious to see you."

Then he vanished.

Norah entered the room with considerable hesitation and a richly heightened color. Parton scarcely knew what was best to say or do in the circumstances, so he only smiled and flushed. He looked very foolish.

"I am glad that you are better," said Norah, nervously, trying to speak bravely in spite of her confusion. "We have been dreadfully worried about you. The doctor tells me that the fever has left you now, and that all you will need will be rest to put you

into good shape again. Does—does your wrist hurt you *very* much this morning?"

"No," said Parton, "not very much." But he did not want to talk about his wrist. That was such an unimportant matter. He went on: "I want to thank you. I—I must have been a great trouble to you. The doctor has told me how good you have been to me. I think that I have never heard of a more amazing thing than that you are on this ship!"

"I have," said she.

"What?" he asked.

"The fact that you are on it," she said merrily. "You see, *I* took my passage in quite the regular way!"

"Perhaps my method *was* a little unusual," he admitted, smiling.

"It was—it was the most wonderful thing that I have ever heard of!" she exclaimed. "Some time you must tell me all about it."

Parton started to speak, but she stopped him.

"Not now," she said, hurriedly. "If I am to be your nurse you must obey all my orders."

"If you *will* be my nurse, I will," he said, happily.

"Well, one of them," she said, "is that you must not talk about these things for the present. Just now—sure, we'll just be thankful that it wasn't worse! I can never—I can never tell you how dreadfully the whole thing has made me feel. That night—that night in the cab, you know," she smiled—"I didn't quite realize it all. That man MacFarren! But the next day, when I found that he actually had policemen looking for you, faith! I believe that I could have choked him and sung 'The Jigs of Ireland,' smiling, while he strangled. And when I

found that you had really done as you had said you would and had vanished from the surface of the earth so far is he knew—why, sure I was so pleased about it that I thought I never *would* stop grinning! Then I put that little notice in the *Times*. Did you see it?"

"Yes," said Parton. "It was better than—well, in a way, it was as good as fresh water would have been when I was floating with the Captain."

"Well, about the time I had come back from the newspaper office, MacFarren returned from the Safety Deposit drawer to which you had given him the key. Faith! He was entirely insane! He had in his hands the things he had taken from the drawer, and every time he looked at them they drove him crazy. I only wish you could have heard his conversation. It was sweeter to me than the songs of birds but it didn't sound at all like them. I never hear a bird swear! He carried the assignment which you had given to your mother and on which he based his claim around in his pocket with him, and, while he sat at the table with the rubbish he had found there in that drawer, he took it out and looked at it, and then became violent again. I only went upstairs where I could not hear him after he had reached a point in his conversation which I was afraid it might be sinful for me to even listen to."

She laughed.

"But I was frightened, too," she said. "His anger was so vicious that I knew that he would move Heaven and earth to get you. It was then that he offered the reward. It was in that way that I caught him where I wanted him to be."

"How do you mean?" said Parton.

"Whist!" said she. "He doesn't know as yet. But when he offered that reward he deposited as security for it down at the Home Secretary's office *my own property*. I knew that he'd been using it before, instead of acting as a manager as he had been directed in my father's will; but that was too much. At first I thought that I would have him up for it, and then I thought the matter over carefully, and made up my mind that I would let him tie his hands as hard as ever he could, first. Again I saw a lawyer, and I didn't see a friend of his. He told me that the fact that he had done that constituted the offence of mis-ap-pro-pri-a-tion, or something similarly hard to say, and I said nothing at all about it. I had not the slightest thought that you would let yourself be caught by him or by anybody he could hire to follow you. So, for two days, I said never a word at all. Then I went again to my lawyers, and I found that I had MacFarren where I wanted to have him, and I had some papers drawn. I have them with me now. If he bothers you at all when we get over to America I'll have them served on him—and then—Faith! then, I'm thinkin'—he will wish he'd left the law alone entirely!"

All this was interesting; but it was not what Parton thought of most. Matters came a little nearer to it when she said:

"Sure! I have been that worried about you! I prayed for you each night and ran an advertisement in the *Times* each morning! I didn't quite know which would do the most good, you know, so I tried them both."

"I saw the advertisement," said Parton, happily. "It did very well, indeed. I don't know what the

prayers accomplished; but the advertisement cheered me up when I badly needed it."

"I'm glad," said Norah. "I was afraid you wouldn't see it. You'll find it in the New York *Herald*, too, if we ever get ashore."

"You have been tremendously good to me," said Parton. "I am very much obliged."

"It *was* pretty good for a girl," said Norah. "I had the advertisement and the money to pay for it with cabled to the *Herald*."

"What made you think that I was coming to America?" Parton asked.

"It's the land of the free and the home of the brave," said Norah, "and I *knew* you were brave, and hoped you'd stay free! And then, you know, you had your bag sent on to Paris. That naturally made me figure that you were going somewhere else."

Parton wondered where his worry was. It certainly had all vanished.

"Now," said the Irish girl, "we cannot understand one another too quickly or too well. I've had a quarrel with our greedy relative-in-law that would have fitted Donnybrook—and all about you and your diamonds. I've always heard that trouble comes with riches. Now, I know it's so."

"If it also goes when they do," said Parton, ruefully, "my diamonds will cause no more."

"And why?" asked Norah, wondering.

Parton hesitated for the fraction of an instant before he replied. With the loss of the diamonds had gone the wealth which would have justified him in asking her to marry him. Now he would have no right to talk of such things. He was too poor,

again, to marry! The situation sobered him instantly. She noticed it, and asked again:

"And why?"

"The diamonds sank with the ship I sailed on," he said, grimly.

The announcement had an unexpected effect upon her. He had not precisely thought that she would look at him with scorn when she discovered this; but he certainly was not prepared for the bright expression of real relief which came to her as the significance of his statement sank into her mind.

"Praises be!" she said, with fervor. "Now, perhaps, there'll be some peace! And don't go and get the likes of them again."

"Do you mean—" he began, eagerly.

"No, I don't," she said, quickly, but with a dazzling smile. She waited a moment before she spoke again, and he did nothing at all to fill the gap.

"It's been very fine to have you ill here," she finally said, with a laugh.

Parton looked at her in surprise.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Oh, while I nursed you—and sure I'd have nursed you if I'd never seen you before—"

Parton's face fell, and she laughed down into his eyes as she noticed it. Then, leaning over toward him somewhat confidentially, she said in a loud whisper:

"I'm not *saying* that I'd have nursed you quite so willingly, do you mind!"

He grinned again with such satisfaction that the look upon his face made the rich color surge into hers. He reflected as he looked at her that his

previous experience had failed ever to reveal to him any such wonders in a woman's face.

As he lay there and looked at her he wondered what was safe for him to think. He wondered how much of the jumble that floated in his mind was really memory of what had happened in the last three days since he had been upon the steamer and how much delirium, manufactured out of wishes. There were impressions in his mind which seemed to him to have been modelled by her soft fingers as they touched his face caressingly. There was a hazy vision that at one time—he fancied that his delirium had just passed through a bit of violence—she had stooped over him and done more than let her graceful fingers touch him. He looked up at her again, and there was something in his look that made her turn her eyes away. They were still turned from him when she spoke, and the words came somewhat hesitatingly.

"I—I wish that you would tell me—" she began.

"What?" asked Parton.

"Well," she said, with the color rising in her cheeks and her dark eyes sparkling with amusement, "well—how much do you remember, of what has happened on the ship—about the time when I've been nursin' you?"

He had already listened with delight, as, when she was very much in earnest, the Irish sometimes crept out of her blood into her speech and clipped the g's off daintily.

"I remember," said Parton very slowly, "I remember that you were—were very kind to me; but I did not always think that it was you. It sometimes

seemed to me as if it were my mother who was by me."

He looked at her intently.

"That must have been," he said, "—that must have been, when you—it must have been when you——"

But she did not wait for his hesitating tongue to finish. She jumped up, laughing.

"No, I didn't," she said, quickly. "Sure, I never did! 'Twas your delirium that made you think I did!"

And she hurried from the room.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

A COMPENSATING ARRANGEMENT

Don't never talk religion to a man that's jest been accepted by the girl that he's in love with. He's too near one Heaven already to be especial interested in the other that the Bible tells about.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

When she went back again she was gowned for the shore. Those who have crossed often know what that means! The girl who has been pretty and attractive in her ship clothes becomes absolutely wondrous in the finer garb of landing day. Parton was little less than dazzled, and yet there was nothing in her costume which was not simple—even sedately unassuming. She saw that he was impressed by it, and colored richly. She was not the sort of girl to fling the banners in her cheeks to the breeze of every man's attention; but his delighted look brought its quick response in vivid coloring. The doctor had sent a steward in, and Parton was fully dressed and sitting in a carpet-seated folding chair. His arm had been put in a wire and plaster splint, and carefully swung in a muslin sling, covered by a large black silk handkerchief from the doctor's trunk. His clothes might have been more elegant, perhaps, but they were the best that they had been able to drum up on board for him. The doctor had guyed him about his appearance, but had taken some of the sting away from his remarks by revealing to the Englishman some of the glories of the American

ready-made clothing establishment, and promising to go with him as soon as they should land, to buy a suit. What Parton had had on at the time he left the *Lydia* would hardly have served for city wear, even if it had not suffered from the damp details of his disaster. In order that he might save the good serge suit which he had worn when he boarded the *Lydia*, the Captain had insisted that he should don duck trousers from the slop chest and an ancient peajacket, and it had been in these garments that he had been rescued from the waves. But the doctor assured him that he could buy a very respectable outfit—hat, shoes and all, for ten pounds. In all, Parton stood possessed *lat* that moment of just the amount of cash that was in his belt—something less than seventy pounds, which, being reduced to American money, means not quite three hundred and fifty dollars. And he was the same person who had gone to England little more than two months before with gems worth more than a quarter of a million!

But he gave very little thought to such matters, as he gazed, eager-eyed and admiring, at the gorgeous Irish girl. His face showed white under the fading tan; but the only traces of his fever were the somewhat ragged lips, and the signs of great strain passed, about the eyes.

"I have just seen Captain Burgee," she said, forgetting the smiles and blushes.

"How is he?" asked Parton, also sobering.
"Sure, he's pitiful!" said Norah. "Every minute he says, over and over again, 'Lyddy, Lyddy, Lyddy!' but whether he means his wife or his ship, I cannot tell. Once in a bit he rouses, and then I think he knows something about what's happened,

dimly, for he asked the doctor, after the throbbing of the engines stopped, if we were in port, and when he heard we were he nodded his head, pleased like. But that he doesn't know he's on a steamer instead of his own vessel, you would think from his telling the doctor to have her brought to anchor for a while, until he could go ashore and see his consignees about docking and unloading. And he thinks it's Boston, not New York, that we have come to. But physically he's far better. Medicine and good food have done that for him. He's been sitting up all the morning. I'm going to take full charge of both of you. We'll take the Captain to some quiet place where he can stay until his people come. The doctor tells me of a good hotel that's well out of the beaten track and not expensive. It's there that I've decided that you'll both go."

Parton smiled involuntarily at her air of masterful possession, but, also, there came a queer look of worry into his face.

"You know," he said, "that I have very little money."

"It had occurred to me," said Norah, "that perhaps you were not exactly affluent for the moment. I've read it somewhere that castaways are more than likely to be financially embarrassed. Did you save any money from the ship?"

"I have what was in my belt—perhaps seventy pounds," said Parton. "That's my whole fortune now." He smiled ruefully. "I don't know where the belt is, though. Some one must have taken it from me after I was brought on board."

Again Norah blushed a little.

"I have it," she said. "I had almost forgotten to

give it you. I'll go and get it for you. Or no—I shall take charge of that as well as of everything else, until—until I see you safe at your hotel. Don't let money worry you. I have some, an' I've telegraphed for more. The Captain of this ship said that I might send a message to the cable office by the doctor's boat, and so I did so. I don't look ahead to real starvation. And it won't be long before you're makin' lashin's. Faith! We'll get along, some way!"

Parton started at the plural pronoun. Was it possible that she intended—! She had tolerated the moonings of his groping mind when he had been half delirious without resentment; but he reasoned that if he had said the same things when he was well and in full control of his tongue, she might have bitterly resented them. He often thought of that last night, when they had been together in the cab and she had let him kiss her; but those circumstances had been so entirely abnormal that he did not feel that he could sensibly use them as a basis for a present argument. He wondered, too, if he had any *right* to ask her now that his fortune was at the bottom of the sea! He had no training which he might use to even earn a living for her. Still, there had been that plural pronoun. She had not said, "I don't believe *you'll* starve,"—she had certainly said "we"!

In the midst of these reflections there came a serious bother to him. It made his face burn to think of it. The old adage "pity is akin to love," popped into his brain, and he wondered if, in case he really had touched her heart, the path emotion followed had been the one of pity. He did not want that. It did not occur to him that there were things in him

which she might honestly admire. It did not once impress him as possible that a woman might fall in love as quickly and as deeply as a man might. Like all men really in love, he regarded the object of his adoration as a One Apart, unlikely to be influenced by the impulses or emotions of everyday humanity. Those distinctly pleasant moments which had passed with the complete recovery of his wits seemed now so far away and so incredibly delightful that he would have doubted his memory of them had it not been for the corroborative evidence of the ship's doctor. He was nervously anxious to know what her next move would be, but he scarcely dared to ask her about it. The reason of her voyage had never been quite clear to him, and he had refrained from questioning her about it for various reasons, none of them too well defined. Now he spoke.

"Why upon earth did you make this trip, Miss—Miss—"

Her laughing eyes stopped him there. It seemed as if the slight, involuntary movement of her hand had been toward his face. He remembered, indistinctly, that while he had been delirious, she had several times stopped his ravings by putting her small hand across his mouth and gently pressing it there while she spoke soothing words. He wondered, joyfully, if this movement had been a reminiscence of those delightful if somewhat muddled hours.

She laughed gayly, but the banners in her cheeks flew just a bit more vividly.

"Sure, now," she said, "you wouldn't do such things after all the good I've been to you!"

"Such things as what?" he inquired, honestly puzzled.

"Why, 'Missin'' me and such like things as that," she said. "If I can be Norah to a sick man I hope I can be also to a healthy one who's got too many things to think about to give him any time to figure on unnecessary ceremonies. 'Miss' me when I'm not by you. That's the 'Missing' I'd appreciate. Would you mind so much if I should tell you that you might call me 'Norah,' sick or well, instead of just when you are ailin'? I ask it as a favor." She dropped her eyes for one tantalizing moment, but then they rose and met his own again, not boldly, but with a half-veiled merriment in them which made them irresistible. "I've dropped into the habit—we Irish folks are awful ones for habit—of thinkin' of yourself as 'Henry,' and it would shame me if you should talk to me as 'Miss'!"

Parton gazed steadily straight into her eyes for a moment. He wondered if he were wrongly interpreting the pleasant look in them.

"You haven't told me why you made this trip—Norah," he said after a moment's pause. "Why was it?" An instant later, while she hesitated, he added, "Was it just to save an abstract man from an injustice threatened by MacFarren?"

Her head swayed forward, and the steady gazing of her eyes into his ceased wholly. They turned their glories to a handkerchief that rested in her lap.

"Sure," she said slowly, "you forget that I had the family reputation for common decency to look after. Even if I'd no thought of you, I'd have had to do what was to be done to keep him from spoiling the fine name of MacFarren entirely."

As Parton sat and looked at her his uncertainty passed, and he knew that in some way, before they

left the ship, he should tell her what was in his mind and take the risk of having all his chances spoiled by too precipitate an action. He felt that it would be tempting Fate to make such haste, but he also felt that he was quite too weak to resist the impulse that urged him on.

"What reason did you give for your coming over here?" he asked.

"I gave him none," she said. "He knew well why I came. After the talk we had when I found out his plans, he needed no more explanation. I told him that if he bothered you I'd let him go his way and I'd go mine. I told him that I had no use for such actions as he'd planned. It seemed to me, I told him, that I'd sooner nibble crusts than have the best that came in that way. He told me that he'd done it quite as much for me as for himself, and then I laughed at him. Finally, when he found that I was quite in earnest—why, he cast me to the winds of Heaven. All four of them he threw me to—and then flew after me."

"Did you really have a quarrel with him?" asked Parton, leaning toward her.

"Not a quarrel," said Norah. "'Twas scarcely mild enough for that. In Kerry 'twould be called a fight. 'Twas but the bit of breedin' that was in him that kept him from strikin' me, I'm thinkin'!"

"And finally, when you insisted, and he found that you really were coming—what did he do then?" asked Parton.

"He came too," said Norah. "I made the doctor promise not to say anything about it while you were ill, and I had fair forgotten all about it, since."

For a moment Parton was too surprised to speak.

The presence of the Irish girl had been a great amazement to him; but he had been too ill and too busy with other and less pleasant thoughts to analyze it before. Now he began to understand. He reached out his uninjured arm and touched her hand with the ends of his fingers wonderingly. She did not draw it away; she merely paid no attention to his act at all, and he laid his hand back in his own lap, as she went on with her story.

"At first," Norah continued, slowly, "when he found that I was really in earnest about leaving him if he should do what he had said he would do about that transfer and your diamonds, faith, sure, I thought he would try to keep me home by violence! But then he gave that up, and kept very quiet. He's a clever man. He let me go ahead and make my plans—and I had no idea at all of hiding them; I'm proud of what I've done—and went down to Waterloo Station to see me go away, as I supposed. But when we got there he got into the railway carriage with me. 'Twas little that I said to him during the run down to Southampton. I thought he merely wanted to keep me company until I got there, or had an idea of having some kind of law on me when we got to the dock to keep me at home, or something; but when we reached Southampton, he went aboard the ship with me—and he's on board her yet, and so am I, and so are you, and praises be for that last, too! Of course I knew you'd have to know, but I hated so to tell you while you were so weak and ill! Ought I to have told you all about it before this?"

Parton sat silent for a moment. There was a certain grim humor in the situation. It might be very grim indeed—he realized that.

"Does he know that the diamonds are lost?" he asked, at last.

"I've told him so, but it may be that he does not quite believe me," said Norah. "At first he swore that he would come in to see you himself and find out about it or drink your blood, or something—oh, he was very funny!—but I made the doctor get the Captain to forbid him to on the ground that it would be dangerous to trouble you, and, faith! I believe it would have been for a time. Then he told me that he had planned to make worry for you when you landed; but I told him that he must not. He laughed at me when I said that; but I hope I've changed the manner of his merriment."

"How?" asked Parton.

Again Norah colored vividly.

"Sure, I'll *never* tell you that!" she said.

"Why?" asked Parton, puzzled.

"It's quite my own affair," she said, gaily, but still blushing. "Perhaps I have not stopped him, quite, for I never would be able to carry out the threat I made, I'm thinkin'; but maybe he will hesitate a little."

"Please tell me what the threat was," protested Parton.

"Sure, I never will," said Norah. "Sure I *never* will, unless—unless——," and she stopped.

"Unless what?" asked Parton. He was singularly happy. The circumstances did not warrant it.

"Unless I have to try to make it good," said Norah, blushing even more brilliantly than before, and quickly dropping her eyes to escape his asking gaze.

"It must have been a terrifying threat," he commented.

"That's as how you look at it," said Norah. "I'm thinkin' that it would not be so awful—in some circumstances; but it would be hard on him!"

"How?" said Parton, persistently.

"Hush up!" said Norah, and never another word could he get from her about it.

He sat looking at her silently.

"We're almost at the dock, I'm thinkin,'" said Norah, suddenly. She kneeled on the sofa and looked out of one of the portholes. "This must be New York that we're passing—it's as jagged as a saw edge. I'll tell you—Henry,"—she cast a quick look at him as she called him by the name, and turned back, laughing, to her porthole before she spoke again, "we'll find it easier to get on here, I feel certain, than it seems likely to be now."

Just then one of the great North River ferryboats caught her eye and she watched it with curiosity until it got beyond her range of vision. She evidently did not care to look at him just then.

"Don't you want to come and see what queer things there are in your new home?" she asked, happily.

A moment later it became evident to her that the ship was turning to the eastward, and that this meant that it was going to its dock. She whirled around quickly and spoke gravely to him.

"I'm not sure about Mr. MacFarren," she said, rapidly. "I feel fairly sure that he will not try to make trouble for you, because—because of something—because of what I said to him. But if he does—if he does, what shall we do about it?"

Again there was that delightful "we"! Parton felt that he scarcely cared what the man might do, if

only the step-daughter would continue to merge her affairs with his so charmingly.

"What shall we do about it?" she asked again.

"There is only one thing that can be done, so far as I can see," said Parton. "If he has fully made up his mind that he can gain something by having me taken into charge, accused of stealing something of which he never was the owner, I shall have to grin and bear it at first, I suppose, and make him suffer for it afterwards. I cannot run away, and I would not if I could. I have been very much worried about it in the past when I have thought about it; but now, if he cares to go ahead, I scarcely feel that I shall care much. I think," he added, slowly, "that I should not care at all, if you told me that it would make no difference in—in—"

"In what?" asked Norah, making not so much as a movement indicating that she ever intended to turn her face toward him again.

"That it would make no difference in your feelings toward me," said Parton, boldly.

"Haven't I told you that I came over here to keep him from doing it, and that if he did do it, that I didn't approve of it at all?" said Norah, with her face still turned away.

Parton's situation at this moment was aggravating. He felt that he could scarcely say the other things which were thronging on his tongue's end, without being much nearer to her than his position in the chair, and hers there, kneeling on the sofa, made possible. He started to rise and his pre-occupation with other matters was shown by the fact that in trying to, he forgot that his arm was crippled, and used it as a lever to help him up. The effect

was instantaneous. As the splints cracked, a sickening pain shot through his arm, and he threw it up and waved it in a half circle. It almost touched her, and a few shreds of the cotton with which it was swathed did brush her back, and clung there, mute witnesses to what he had proposed to do, but had not done. But so light was the contact that she was wholly ignorant of it, and only whirled suddenly with a quick gesture and a frightened face when, as he sank back into his chair, he emitted a painful grunt of misery.

"What has happened?" she asked, with quick, sympathetic terror.

He could feel that the blood was running away from his lips and his cheeks as he replied to her with a wholly failing attempt to make light of the pain that stole his strength.

"I—I hurt my arm a little," he said, somewhat weakly and with a sickly grin instead of the brave smile that all men involuntarily try for when they are in pain before women. That his face frightened her there could be no doubt, for she jumped from the sofa and hovered over him, anxiously. Once or twice she touched him, and, in spite of the pain, he felt the joy of it. Together they investigated the damage done, and she went away to find the doctor. He was very busy with some affairs of the ship, but came quickly.

After he had found that nothing worse had happened than the total spoliation of the splint, he looked at Parton with an exasperated grin.

"You know," he said, and as he spoke his glance shifted once or twice to Norah, "you know that that arm is in no shape yet for *any* kind of usefulness.

You can use it neither for business nor for pleasure. You must remember, Mr. Parton, that no matter how much—how much you may be tempted to—to, well, to do anything at all with it except to let it rest in its splint and let it get well slowly, you must resist. Or, perhaps—perhaps you might try the other arm!"

Parton did not know quite what he meant, but he fancied that there was a joke which concerned his fair companion hidden in his words. It was only when, just before he left, Norah chanced to turn around and Parton saw that bit of white fluff which rested ostentatiously upon the back of her tailor jacket at about the waist line, and saw the doctor glance amusedly at it that he understood. What the doctor thought was obvious enough.

"I'll be down again as soon as I get the steerage folks safely on the barge," the doctor called, as he hurried to the door. "Then I'll put a new splint on." He lingered a moment, grinning outrageously. Then he added, "and for your sake, Miss MacFarren, I'll fix the bandage so that it will cover *all* the cotton. In the meantime, Parton—well, I don't want to be hard on you, or to suppress any tendency toward the exhibition of natural affection among family connections. But—use the other arm!"

And he vanished.

Parton felt faint no longer, and was conscious that he was not, at that moment, pale.

"Faith! What upon earth did he mean by that?" asked Norah, puzzled.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Parton, lying wickedly; but then he said: "Won't you come here a minute?"

She took the two or three steps necessary to carry her near to him, wonderingly.

"Turn around, please," said Parton.

She did so, and he picked the clinging fibre off, and as she turned again, laughingly held it up before her.

"I fancy," said Parton, slowly, "that he saw this, and—and drew his own conclusions. It was just at the waist line, you know. But I was not guilty."

"Sure, and what if he did and what were you not guilty of?" asked Norah, still failing to understand; but suddenly it flashed over her. Parton wondered if she would be angry, but he only wondered for a moment. She sat down on the sofa and laughed, rosily.

"So you have the name without the game," said she with most exasperating amusement. "That's not like what I've heard of you in Africa." Then she counterfeited commiseration. "And was *that* how you hurt your arm? Sure, it's the unfortunate man you are, for certain!"

"It is a pity," said Parton boldly, "but it isn't the hurt to the arm that I'm thinking of."

"What then?" asked Norah.

"The pity is that it hurt too soon and stopped me before I'd done one half that I'd intended," he answered, looking at her steadily—a gaze which she met, not without an effort to keep from bubbling over with that pleasant laughter again.

"And a burnt child dreads the fire," said she. "I don't suppose you'll ever try again!"

Parton did not answer and she sat looking at him for a moment. The ship was being shoved into her dock by steam tugs, and the air was continually rent

by the shrill shrieks of whistles. The sight from the porthole would have been very interesting at that time, and they were probably the only passengers on the ship who were not watching the shore. But, somehow, neither of them thought of it at all. Her eyes were turned toward her lap again and she fingered a corner of her handkerchief.

"Still," she said, finally, while she flashed the wink of a glance at him, "I'm afraid that I'm not safe yet. For, as the doctor says, you have the other arm, you know!"

"But you know he also said that I must not move till he returned," said Parton, trying to look ruefully down at the arm which was wrapped in the splintered plaster bandage.

"Then I'm safe," said she.

"But I might disobey his orders," said Parton, speculatively.

"You'll never do that and get your arm all bad again after all the trouble I've taken to get it where it is," she said quickly and with real anxiety in her tone.

"But think," said Parton, "of the trouble I took to get it where it—isn't! It was very painful."

"Oh, you poor gossoon!" said Norah, with some sarcasm. "May it be a lesson to you!" Again her eyes and fingers were busied with the handkerchief. "And you never could reach far enough with what good arm is left to you," she said without looking up.

"No," said Parton.

"Not unless I came and stood beside you," said Norah, still considering, while the whistles tooted and Parton felt anxiously that they were likely to

get to the dock at almost any minute and, therefore, be interrupted by the steward or some other equally thoughtless person.

"No," said Parton.

"And of course," said Norah, "I never would do that!"

"No," said Parton, "I'm afraid not, and that's the trouble."

"Still," said Norah, as if carefully reflecting, "I must not forget that I'm your nurse."

"No," said Parton, "don't."

"Is the situation as it is very hard to bear?" asked Norah, with intense solemnity.

"Tremendously," said Parton.

"Do you think, now, that it might retard your final recovery from your—illness if you should keep on bein' troubled?" she asked, as if figuring out a diagnosis.

"It might," said Parton, "and even if it didn't, it might make me disobey the orders of the doctor."

"Sure, *that* you must *not* do," said Norah with decision.

"The tendency is strong," said Parton, calmly.

She gurgled just a bit, but suppressed it quickly.

"Faith! I wonder what we'll do!" she said with a gesture of helplessness.

"He definitely said," commented Parton, "that I might use the *other* arm."

"But it's on the wrong side," said Norah, looking at it curiously.

"No," said Parton with conviction. "It's not the arm that's on the wrong side. That is you."

"Do you think that's it?" said Norah.

"I am sure of it," said Parton.

"And it's a pity, too," said Norah.

"But it might be remedied," said Parton.

"Do you think it might?" asked Norah. "Now how would we go about the fixin' of it, do you think?"

"You'd have to move," said Parton. "You'd have to come around on this side."

"So I would, now, wouldn't I?" said Norah.

"Yes," said Parton.

But, apparently satisfied with having ascertained the facts of the case, she made no motion. Again her eyes went down toward the handkerchief in her lap, and again its folding and unfolding busied her. But still the clamor of the tugs and the shouts and other interesting noises which came through the porthole did not seem to attract her attention and Parton considered that a favorable sign.

"Well?" said he, making a question of the word.

"Well?" repeated Norah, with an accent of surprise. It was as if she had considered the conversation ended and the subject closed.

"Don't you think you might?" Parton asked.

"Sure, I *might!*" said Norah.

"Will you?" asked Parton, and there was a ring of something very near to real anxiety in his voice.

Norah sat quiet for a moment. Then she raised her eyes to his and laughed. Once or twice, even, she made a move as if to rise. Parton's suspense was not unpleasant, but it was very real.

"Will you?" he said again.

There was one more flash from beneath the suddenly lifted, unveiling eyelashes, and she sprang up with a suddenness that almost startled him. There was a strange and disconcerting change in the ex-

pression of her face. She was no longer the half bold, half shy Irish girl who had been sitting there on the sofa, alternately egging him on and pushing him away. There was an infinitely sweet expression of yielding womanhood in her face and in her movement. Her eyes were modestly hidden by her lashes as she took her place at the side of his chair—the side which enabled him to use the other arm. Parton reached it out and drew her down to him and kissed her. There were no signs of desperate displeasure, so he kissed her more than once.

"Norah!" said he, softly.

"Sure, you didn't know how much I wanted to," she said.

"Norah," said he again.

"Yes," said Norah, "here I am. Can't you find me? Am I not near enough? I never could get nearer!" She pressed her flushing face against his shoulder and held it tightly there.

For a moment Parton said nothing, although he made no sign that he would ever let her go.

"Norah," he said finally, "Norah, will you marry me?"

"I'd made my mind up to it," she said happily while she burrowed her face into the cloth of his coat until it almost stopped her voice. "I'd made up my mind to do it, whether you wanted me to or not. 'Twas the only way that I could make Mac-Farren keep his hands away from you. 'Twas the only way I could save the family reputation for high-mindedness where diamonds are concerned. It was with marryin' you that I threatened him!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

IN NEW YORK

If close steerin' was all that was needed in th' navigation of a ship, all th' skippers would be women.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

The few moments which followed this interview were most satisfactory to both of them; but the doctor came back to the stateroom so soon as to make them feel indefinitely resentful of the fact that he existed. It can hardly be said that he interrupted them, for they were not even holding one another's hands. Norah had returned to her post of observation at the porthole, and Parton was leaning back in his chair with his eyes closed. To both of them it seemed that their love had begun an indefinite number of long years before and would go on an indefinite number of short years to come. They felt that there was no need to crowd in the love-making indecorously—for they both knew that while they lived there would be no end to it. There was a calm and satisfied certainty about their emotions, which I am told is unusual among sufferers from such pleasant derangements of the heart. Neither doubted the reality of the other's love. Their emotions had among them a sense of complete security.

The doctor looked at them with some surprise.

"What?" said he. "Have you quarrelled?"

"Quarrelled? No," said Parton.

"I wonder if I diagnosed the case all wrong, then," remarked the doctor with a speculative look.

"Sure," said Norah, "and it may be so. All doctors have to ask their patients about their feelin's and their symptoms before they decide upon their ailments, and, faith! you haven't asked a single question."

"I had thought that I might judge by superficial signs," the doctor said. "There was that cotton, you know."

"It might have been the draught from the ventilator that carried it there," said Norah.

"It might have been," the doctor said, "but wasn't."

All three laughed and the doctor looked at Parton with an amused interest.

"If it's *really* symptoms that will make you feel quite sure," said Norah, jumping down from the settee and going nearer to Parton, "I'll have to give you one to keep you quiet."

And she kissed Parton softly on the forehead.

"Does that help your diagnosis any?" she asked, blushing. "I'd hate to have you puzzled."

"Thank you," said the doctor. "I feel no more doubts. I know what ails you both, and it's my professional opinion that you won't get well."

"Praises be," said Norah. "Sure, we want to die of it—but very slow and lingerin'. Say after sixty years of sufferin' from the sweet disease!"

She was very charming, and both men knew it and showed their knowledge in their eyes.

"I came with a message, Miss MacFarren," said the doctor, after a moment of nonsense talk. "Mr. MacFarren wants you. I told him where you were, and suggested that he might come here to see you; but he did not grasp at my advice with any eager-

ness. I don't want to seem impertinent; but it may be only right for me to tell you that I gathered from what he said that he—did not disapprove of the abstract idea of your acting as a nurse; but that he criticised your choice of—invalids."

"What has he said to you?" asked Norah, quickly. "In straight reality he is no more a relative of mine than he is of Henry's here."

"And, as I understand it," said the doctor, "he is Parton's step-father."

"Faith, it would take a whole flight of such steps to take him high enough for Henry Parton or myself to claim as real relation," said Norah, with decision.

"This is very interesting," the doctor commented. "Have you and Parton figured out what relation you are to one another?"

"No," said Norah, "we've been too busy to do that, in—figuring out the relation that we're *going* to be."

She flashed a quick glance at Parton, who gasped a little; but who really had nothing left to say. There were continual surprises in this beautiful Irish girl and they were much more pleasant than they were puzzling.

"You see," said Norah, "we've been able to arrange the family quarrel—our part of it at least—by arbitration; but we'll need a little help from you. It's not exactly professional services that we'll ask of you. You've already done so well as a physician that we won't bother you that way any more. The—the professional services will have to come along another line. It's not a Doctor of Medicine that we're after now, it's a Doctor of Divinity."

Parton gasped again and the doctor sat down, precipitately, on the red plush covered sofa.

"You needn't look so sore distressed," said Norah. "It's not a funeral we want him for." She flamed with her cheeks and flashed with her eyes at both of them. "It's for a wedding."

Parton, richly colored for a sick man, was quite speechless against his will. The doctor sat silent, evidently as happy as most men can be made by passing events. He had not had an experience just like this before, in spite of his copious contact with the travelling, and, therefore, the eccentric, public.

Norah went on, without hesitation, but not without a certain air of maidenly confusion and reserve, which was bravely overcome, however, by what she considered the exigencies of an unusual case.

"We've got to talk to *some* one," she said, slowly, to the doctor, "and if you don't want to be the one why you may run away."

"You don't see me running, do you?" asked the doctor.

"Will you promise that in all your life you'll never tell—especially till the episode is passed?" she asked him.

"Yes," said the doctor. "I'll promise anything. Just let me in on this and I'll take oaths! Lord! Wouldn't I like to see MacFarren's face when he hears all about this episode? Life gets monotonous to us fellows who sail the briny deep. We're glad to have a change. This is a novelty. I hail it with delight. You bet I'll promise."

"Now I'm glad of that," said Norah, "and you may go to work for us. Please, first, tell Mr. MacFarren that I am busy getting Mr. Parton ready to

be taken to the shore. Just tell him that he's suffering from a complication—that's he's troubled with an affection of the heart. Sure and isn't he? Don't tell him, though, who the affection's for, nor that I have the same disease. Tell him that he's quite delirious—it's always said that when a man's in love he's crazy. Tell him that when there's talk about my goin' away he calls for me, moanin' like—soft and low, you know. Just do it once, now, Henry, so the doctor won't be lyin' to him."

Parton, full of the joy of the time, mimicked sore distress and carefully emitted four painful bleats like those of a sick lamb left on a lonely moor at night and faintly signalling to another lonesome lamb named Norah.

"That's right," she said, "and it's enough. If you should repeat that last one, sure, I'm certain that I'd just break down and cry—for shame of you." Then she turned to the doctor again. "And tell him that you're afraid to let me go away from him just now." She looked at Parton laughingly, but with a vein of serious intention on her face. "And, sure, it's well you may feel fear of lettin' me go from him," she said. "I'd tear the eyes of anyone that parted us two before that ceremony that I'm thinkin' of—or yours," she said to Parton, "if you permitted it! Are you sorry I'm in love with you? My jealous disposition is that awful!" Then, turning to the doctor again, she went on: "Tell him also that I'll have to go with the patient to the hotel where they're going to take him to, and that afterwards—you needn't say how long—I'll join him, anywhere he says. You'll have to go along with us, for we need you as a sympathetic witness. and I'll have to see him

afterwards in order to get my trunks of him. But don't go into details, doctor. If it's mad he gets, sure, that'll be too bad; but I'm fearing that we will not change our plans to save his temper. Do you see the situation, doctor, dear?"

"Dimly," said the doctor, joyously. "I am beginning to get some indefinite glimpses of it. But while all this marriage and giving in marriage is going on, what am I to do with Captain Burgee?"

"For that," said Norah, "I am willing to delay my wedding. If it were not for him I'm fearing that I might hurry it a bit. Did you think that I was so heartless as to forget the dear old Captain? I sent a message to his wife by the telegraph agent that came on board at quarantine. 'Lyddy' is a name that ought to exactly fit the Captain's wife. I wish she could be here for the ceremony; but I don't suppose that she can possibly get my message in time for that, although, from what I'm told, it's not so very far away she is. She's staying with her niece on a place called Staten Island. It's only across the Bay from New York City. I took the liberty of reading a letter that was in the Captain's pocket in order to learn that. She may get it almost in time to meet us at the hotel you told me of."

"What hotel?" asked the doctor.

"The one that's named after a piece of the Captain's oath," said Norah. "I've forgotten which piece it was. 'Twas the John hotel or Quincy House, or maybe it is kept by Mr. Adams."

"The Quincy House," said the doctor, smiling. "It's where I always stay. I had forgotten that I'd spoken of it. I get a discount there, too, and they'll

make it for the whole of us. It's not fashionable; but it's comfortable and quiet."

"Well, I telegraphed her to meet us there," said Norah. "I wish she could get there for the ceremony; but I'm afraid that we can't wait. Sure, I never was in such a hurry to get married in all my life before!"

The doctor suddenly grew serious.

"I've got to say something disagreeable to both of you," he said. "The old man, I'm afraid, will try to spoil these pleasant plans. He's been talking pretty freely around the ship, and I guess he thinks it's not the bonds of Holy Wedlock that should be on Parton's wrists. His choice would be for handcuffs. I'm afraid that you'll find it all in the afternoon papers. I've had great sport with the reporters. They got on board at quarantine, you know, and it was only because I was a cheerful liar that they have not been down to bother you. I told them that Parton was quite too ill to be seen by anyone. They hate me for it, and I'm sorry; but I thought you would not want to have them come. I hope the pictures will turn out all right, though!"

"What pictures?" asked both young people with one voice.

"Why, Parton's portraits, you know," replied the doctor. "They'll be on the streets almost as soon as we are off the dock. I've done my best for you. They had to depend upon me for a description of you after I wouldn't let them see you, and I've given one to each of them. You'll see how well I've done for you when the papers come out. I took each artist aside and told him confidentially, making him promise not to tell the other fellows. The *World*

will have Parton with side whiskers. The *American*, smooth-faced. The *Evening Telegram* will print him with a moustache, and the *Mail and Express* will make him look like a Church of England curate. I told their man that he was very High Church, and that when he was in delirium he called continually for a stained glass window. He made careful notes. The *Evening Sun* and the *Commercial Advertiser* had no artists down the Bay this morning. I wish they had had. I was ready for them. I had to get my fun all out of their reporters. I told them that I thought there was an error in diagnosing you as an Englishman. I said that I thought you must be a Jap or something Oriental, for you spoke Irish with a Chinese brogue. Perhaps I ought not to have done these things to them; but I thought it might be just as well to distract their minds from the story that I was afraid MacFarren would be pumping into them, and I've made a wondrous hero of you, Parton. I'm afraid MacFarren won't like me any more."

"Why?" asked Norah, between half suppressed merrymakings.

"Why," said the doctor, "when I found that he was talking all over the ship to them with that mouth of his, I just hinted to them that it might be a bit unsafe to print what he had said, because he sometimes was a little flighty and was likely to talk libel when he felt that way. I guess they'll say that he is partly crazy and let it go at that. I hope you are not angry."

"What does Mr. MacFarren mean to do?" asked Norah.

"He's talking a good deal about police," the doc-

tor said. "I would have given a month's salary if I could have locked him up while the newspaper men were on board."

"Sure, you're a darling," said Norah, patting him gently on the shoulder. "Where is he now?"

"I believe that he's at the top of the companion-way, waiting for you to come up," the doctor said.

Norah bent gently over Parton and kissed him on the forehead. She was most delightful, that day, in all her little manners.

"Sure we won't mind the doctor, dear," she said with a fleeting laugh. "If he's good-natured and does just as I tell him, I shall give him one for himself, by and by. I'll run along and see what can be done. Faith, if he bothers me any more, I'll cast him off in earnest."

She found MacFarren very ill at ease and anxiously awaiting her.

"Did the doctor tell you that I wanted to see you, Norah?" he asked curtly.

"Yes," said she, "he did. And it's a message he'll never bear to you from me."

"Norah," said MacFarren, amazed, "what do you mean?"

"I should think that there'd be no mistaking me," she said. "Indeed, I tried to speak as plain as print."

They had walked up to the deck, and MacFarren evidently intended to turn to the side nearest to the dock, where the passengers were already crowding. But Norah turned the other way and, aggravated, he followed her to a less crowded portion of the ship.

I have all your luggage ready to be taken from the ship," he said. "I shall put you into a carriage and

send you to a hotel, where I will join you later. I have some matters to attend to which will take some time, although I shall probably be able to finish with them by four or five o'clock in the afternoon."

"Will you tell me if they include any trouble for Mr. Parton?" asked Norah, quietly.

"I don't know, yet," said MacFarren. "If they do, he has brought it on himself."

"I merely wanted to know," said Norah, "because I have promised the doctor to go to the hotel where he is to take the two sick men—and—and of course I should not want to be there when—when anything disagreeable happens."

"You'll *not* go with him," said the old man with decision. Then an idea came to him and he corrected himself. "Or, after all, perhaps you may as well," said he. "You can telephone to me, or better yet, I can telephone to you and come there to get you when I go to our own hotel."

Norah did not fail to see what the old man's mind had turned upon. The fact that she was to be with Parton would keep him satisfied of that young man's whereabouts.

And so the matter was allowed to rest.

MacFarren turned away. He was plainly angered by the independent attitude taken by the girl, and annoyed by the fact that she obviously sympathized with Parton rather than with himself. But he was not unwilling to turn this to account by using her as an unconscious spy upon the young man's movements, while he investigated and found out just what it would be possible for him to do under the American law toward having Parton taken into custody. At any rate, if the police would accept his statements,

MacFarren intended to have him in a cell within an hour, so his extra time with Norah would be brief. He realized that there might be some difficulty in arranging the arrest so that there should be no unpleasant after effects. His training as an English barrister had taught him that one must be very cautious about invoking the unfamiliar laws of a strange country, as the United States was to him; and that if one acted hastily there was always the possibility of reprisals. He intended to get native advice on this point and act accordingly. In the meantime, as he thought it over, he became wholly willing that Parton should get what good he might out of the society of Norah. It would prevent him from dropping out of sight before proceedings could be commenced. That there was a wedding in the air, he had not the slightest notion.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE LAST OF NORAH MACFARREN

**It's just when we feel certainest that we know where we're steerin' to,
that we find that someone's worked a pocket magnet on our compass.—*The
Logbook of the Lyddy.***

MacFarren left the ship among the first of the departing passengers. Norah, Parton and the doctor, tenderly caring for the Captain, were the very last to go. The Captain was evidently conscious of what was going on, to some extent, although he made no effort at all to speak. There was some trouble about getting a carriage to the end of the gang plank at first and when this had been accomplished it was slow work to carry the Captain down to it so that he would not be injured by the strain of movement.

All these things were done, however, in the course of time. The doctor had already telephoned up to the hotel, telling them there that he was to be expected with his companions, and the carriage started slowly across the wide paved area that lay between the steamship dock and the street proper.

By this time the situation had been explained so clearly to the doctor that he had learned to dislike MacFarren almost as much as he had learned to like the young folk. He felt elated over the prominence which his connection with the party gave him with the other officers of the ship and the newspaper men; there were other interesting episodes to come, no

doubt, and, altogether, as he leaned back and looked at the Irish girl with the sparkling eyes, he was well satisfied.

Parton had gladly turned over to his willing shoulders the whole burden of directing the expedition. There had been some question as to the advisability of getting an ambulance for the removal of the Captain, and the matter of taking him to a hospital instead of a hotel had been discussed; but the old man was very evidently stronger and the doctor thought that the disturbance which would come with dressing him and forcing him to sit up during the drive to the hotel would be more likely to help to arouse him from his partial lethargy than to harm him. The matter of the hospital was settled by Norah as soon as she was assured that there was nothing about his case which might not be properly attended to in a hotel room. She decided that it would probably be much less of a shock to Mrs. Burgee to find her husband so situated, with friends looking after him, than it would be to find him in a formal and ominous institution, with coldly professional nurses in charge of him.

Parton leaned back in the carriage as it rattled over New York's ill paved streets, with tired satisfaction. The excitement and exertion had tired him, and he was, also, trying hard to think out the many problems which were puzzlingly presented to him.

Norah had told him just before they left the ship that she believed that she could prevent MacFarren from taking any steps which would be unpleasant to him; but he had little confidence in her ability to do so—still, as a whole, he had unbounded faith in a

future, during all of which she was to be at his side, and he felt that even if the old man should succeed in making him a great deal of temporary inconvenience through some legal proceedings, no jury could be found which would fail to see and be influenced by the undoubted justice of his own position, and sympathize with him over the loss of the jewels in the sea rather than punish him because he had tried to save them from MacFarren. That MacFarren had been by no means certain of his legal position in the matter was shown by the fact that he had allowed Parton to go away from the ship at all except in the charge of an officer.

While these thoughts were making an anxious mix-up in his mind, he had the tremendous comfort of feeling that Norah was by his side and intended to stay there; that the Captain was in the carriage with them, with fine chances for ultimate recovery; that this could not have been except for his own heroic efforts; and that, while he had utterly and forever lost the fortune for which he had toiled so manfully and long, his strength was returning to him rapidly and would soon enable him to begin another struggle with the world, not more heavily handicapped than he had been when he had first gone to Africa. His gloomiest thoughts were lightened by a glance at Norah's flushed and interested face as she turned toward him frequently from the window of the carriage to comment on the interesting details of the great New World city through which they were passing. Hers was one of those frank and fearless natures which cast doubt out of the hearts of others as the sun drives mist away from landscapes.

A serious worry which was in his mind concerned the coming interview with "Lyddy." Parton looked forward to the long explanations and talks with the New England woman with painful anticipations, and more than once Norah turned her attention from the new scenes to think and speak about the Captain's wife.

At the hotel they made the Captain as comfortable as possible. The ship's doctor summoned other physicians by telephone, and none of the other pressing business which was in hand was discussed until they had arrived and begun their examination. At about the time the first superficial survey of the old sailor's case had been made by the medical men, the ship's doctor was called into the hall by a grinning bell boy. He returned to tell Norah and Parton that a clergyman was waiting in the parlor to perform the ceremony.

"He knows me," said the doctor, "and knows that it's all right if I say so. He crosses by our line every season, and I always make him a little more comfortable on the ship than his passage money calls for. Clergymen are, I have found, a little like newspaper men. They like to get a bit more for the same expenditure than is given to the g. p."

"The g. p.?" said Norah, inquiringly. "What is the g. p.?"

"The general public," said the doctor. "I sometimes think that it's getting to be a term of reproach in this land of the free and home of the brave; but that is what it means. And say, before we see the parson, I ought to tell you that I have asked him to stay and eat with us. I've arranged all that. I've seen the cook myself and he'll knock your eye out

with the spread he'll serve. I've ordered it. It will be all right."

Parton started to protest. He knew that ship's physicians were not men with large incomes as a general thing, and he feared that this enthusiastic, young man was doing a good deal more for them than he could well afford to.

"Don't say a word," said the doctor. "It's all right. I get rates on that, too, of course. Don't you see that I can perfectly easily steer a lot of business from the ship into the way of a hotel like this? They don't pay me a commission on what I send to them; but they never fail to have my restaurant checks receipted when the waiter brings them to me—so all I have to do is to tip the menial. They'll be, besides, mighty glad to have you here. I've tipped them off to the fact that you're likely to be a big card as soon as the papers get on to the fact that you are stopping here."

"Why?" asked Norah, innocently.

"*Why!*" exclaimed the doctor in a tone expressive of amazement because she did not see. "Why, don't you suppose that every paper in New York will have extras out on this affair with the facts and other things I've given them, as soon as they can find type big enough to set the headlines in? The hotel will be a show place until the next sensation comes out in the sporting editions. They ought to let you have everything you need for nothing here and pay you a salary besides. Their increased bar business alone will be big enough to pay them back if they should give you a wedding present."

The ceremony was to be performed in the parlor of a private suite which the hotel had placed at the

disposal of the party for the purpose. The doctor had just gone down to see if everything was ready for it, when a hall boy came up and asked if a lady could see Mrs. Parton.

"I'm afraid not, just yet," said Norah, blushing, "but perhaps before long. She can see me, though. Who is she?"

"It's probably one of the newspaper people," said Parton.

"I don't think so," said the boy. "It's a small lady—old. She looks as if she had come from the country, I guess. She didn't give her name and she seemed to be very much worried. She's been crying. The clerk wasn't at the desk—he's busy with the doctor getting things ready for the wedding. I just came up to tell you myself."

"It's the Captain's wife!" exclaimed Norah. "It must be Mrs. Burgee! Tell her that I will be right down to see her." She colored as she admitted that she had signed the message which she had sent to Staten Island, "Norah Parton."

"Won't you just see her here, in the next parlor?" asked the boy. "The clerk said that you were to have it to receive any one that came to see you. There's so many people downstairs in the halls and public rooms, waiting to get a glimpse of you, that maybe you wouldn't care to go down there."

Norah at once went with Parton to the somewhat gaudy apartment which had been decorated by a contractor to be the bridal suite of the hotel. It was evident that it had been in this contractor's mind that gilt (Parton called them guilty), cupids and very ornate stencilled frescoing would be likely to help along the bliss of newly wedded pairs, for the

walls were sprinkled with them. Norah was excited. The situation of a young woman who has just landed in a strange country, who is about to be clandestinely and unexpectedly married, and who has, besides, the unpleasant duty before her of telling another woman that her husband is possibly fatally ill and that they have suffered the loss of nearly their entire fortune (Parton had told Norah that practically all that the Burgees had was invested in the *Lydia Skolfeld*), is not an ordinary one, but Norah accepted it as calmly as she could. A moment after she had left the room with the bell boy she rushed back alone for a moment, and threw her arms about Parton's neck.

"I feel as if I should like to cry, dear," she said, hurriedly, "so kiss me quickly. I am sure that I shall be better directly after you have done that. Do be quick, please, I must hurry in to her."

But, a moment later, when Parton had his arms around her, she looked up at him and said that he need not, really, make great haste.

Then she went into the next suite and, when she returned, the Captain's wife was with her. She was not at all as they had expected her to be in appearance. The Captain had given the impression (without saying so), that she was a large woman. As a matter of fact she was short and delicate in build. Her face was faded, but wonderfully sweet in its expression, and, while she was nervous, there was not about her the slightest indication of hysterics, either present or to come. She listened attentively to all that they had to say; she took Parton's careful story of the wreck very calmly, and was almost pitifully grateful to them for having done what they had

for her husband's comfort. When Parton told her about the escape from the burning ship and the following hours when the Captain had been bound to the floating gratings, she leaned forward in her chair with an intense, strained look upon her face and with nervously shutting and opening hands. Her desire to see the Captain at once she meekly put aside when she was told that the doctors were with him making an examination, and that they would send word to Parton as soon as they had finished their consultation.

"You've been real kind," she said to Norah, whose heart had instantly gone out to her. "I ain't got my wits about me as yet to thank you, but bimeby I will have. An' I can't never tell you, Mr. Parton, how I shall always feel about what *you've* done. It was almost as if Obed had been shipwrecked right to home with his own folks. If a shipwreck could be comf'table, I guess you did all that you could do to make this one that kind."

"Would you mind," she said, turning to Norah, "if I should *kiss* your husband?"

"He's not my husband," said Norah, coloring.

And then she told Mrs. Burgee about the hurried wedding that was to take place as soon as arrangements could be completed for it, and the two women found a bond of sympathy in this which increased the liking they had already instinctively begun to feel for each other. Mrs. Burgee kissed Parton primly, pecked gratefully at Norah's face with her puckered lips more than once; and wept a little. Then she said:

"If I'd known about the weddin', I'd never have come over from my niece's without a pie or cake or

somethin'. But I suppose that you c'n git most anythin' of that sort here to New York, ready made. I guess somebody's allus bakin' in such a big city, especially around a hotel. I've got a bottle of elderberry wine in my carpet bag. Obed's very fond of it. I allus meet him with a bottle, but I don't s'pose the doctors 'll let him have it now that he's so sick. This is the first time I've ever met him to New York. He most always docks to Boston. Don't seem to me that the *Lyddy* 'll feel comf'table tied up here at one o' these New York docks—but then, she *ain't* tied *up* here, is she? She's floatin' around somewheres out to sea."

"Not floating, I am afraid, Mrs. Burgee," said Parton, sympathetically. He did not like to talk about the ship that was lost with his whole fortune hidden in her. Of course, however, Mrs. Burgee knew nothing about his loss.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Burgee, with calm conviction. "She's floatin'. She's floatin'. She's prob'lly water-logged and mebbe worthless, with some of her cargo sp'iled; but she *can't* sink with all that lumber in her. She *ain't* never sunk before, and I don't believe she'd go and do it now at her time of life. No, sir. She's a-floatin'. That mahogany he had on board would see to that, although it's so heavy that it would prob'lly bear her down till she was just even with the water. She's floatin'—derelict. She *ain't* one o' them fool ships that'll dive down to th' bottom first chance they gits. Not her. That timber'd keep her goin' for months. *That* didn't burn. Obed knows how to stow square timber so that it *can't* burn. Them timbers won't no more than char a little on th' ends an' sides. Square timber packs so

tight, you know, that the air can't git at it, and it can't burn without air. Nothing can't burn without air, you know."

Norah flashed a glance of quick intelligence at Parton. He had whitened a bit under the tan of his exposure. Then, as he recognized the sense of what Mrs. Burgee said, the rich color that had come to his face with the exciting events of the past two or three hours came and went spasmodically. He was by no means wholly recovered from his illness yet, and he felt a bit faint as he considered that there might be a possibility that what she said was true.

"I don't want you to think," said Mrs. Burgee, "that I think you was foolish in abandonin' of her. Course, you had to do that. Twouldn't be no ways sensible to stay aboard an' git fried up like a br'ilin' chicken, an' with Obed sick th' way he was, an' with th' mate so pesky mean th' way *he* was, you couldn't do nothing but what you did do. But th' *Lyddy*—why, she *can't* sink! She's dismantled, an' jest floatin' with th' currents. If Obed was well we'd get what's left of her, even if that *ain't* much.

"Reckon you must have lost all your own baggage, too," she said.

"Yes," said Parton.

"Well," said Mrs. Burgee, "that's prob'lly gone. It was likely stowed in th' cabin, and if it wasn't burnt is likely stole by whoever goes aboard th' ship to bring her in. But Obed and me 'll make that all right to you when she's brought in. He prob'lly had her well insured, an' I guess we won't miss what your loss was. The most valu'ble part of her cargo was that mahogany. *That* ain't burnt much, *I'll* warrant. That's keepin' her poor old hulk afloat

somewheres. Why, I've known ships, not half as stanch as th' *Lyddy*, and not lumber loaded, neither, to float derelict for months. She'll be reported one of these days by that there Hydrographic Office down to Washington, and marked out on their pilot chart. The greatest danger is that some warship'll run across her and blow her up as an obstruction to navigation. But we'll hope for the best in that. Th' *Lyddy*'s too well behaved to make anybody mad at her, even if she *is* disabled. She's got too much sense to be runnin' into folks an' makin' enemies that way. Yes, sir—unless she's been blown up, the *Lyddy*'s still afloat."

For a moment or two Parton's heart was filled by a dazzling, unexpected hope again. He also had heard of wrecks which had floated, derelict, for months. But then Mrs. Burgee's last words echoed in his mind. "Unless she's been blown up!" That was it. That ended hope. She *had* been blown up, but not by any warship, or other guardian of safe navigation. Her cargo had done that for her. It was evident that the Captain's wife was quite as ignorant that the explosive had been aboard as she was about the diamonds.

At first he thought of telling her, but then, quickly reflecting that her woes were already quite heavy enough, he held his peace and Norah flashed him a quick glance of understanding and applause.

Further conversation on the subject was interrupted by the entrance of the doctor. He greeted Mrs. Burgee heartily, and told her that her husband was doing as well as anyone could be expected to after having passed through such experiences as he had known. He delighted her by predicting that

her own nursing would do wonders for the ailing navigator, and said that he had fallen into a sound and apparently restful sleep. He told her gently that it would be unwise to waken him even for the purpose of letting her go to him; but added cheerfully that the moment he woke up she should be told of it and taken to him. It was easy to see that the delay was a great trial to her, but, being a New England woman, she was brave and accepted his decision without complaint.

The doctor seemed to be worried by some matter not at all connected with the Captain's illness, and as soon as he could, with courtesy to Mrs. Burgee, he beckoned to Parton to go into the hall with him.

"Now, old man," said he, "if it's your design to get married here in this hotel, you will be taking my advice if you do it as soon as you can. The clergyman is here and waiting. I just saw a reporter that I know and he told me that old serpent of a step-father of yours was down at police headquarters for more than an hour, telling them that you have robbed him and trying to get a warrant for your arrest. He would have had it long ago if there had not been some mix up about who has authority to issue one for a crime alleged to have been committed on the high seas or in a foreign country. If you are married at all to-day, I am pretty reasonably certain that you will spend your wedding night in jail; and that you won't *be* married to-day unless you hurry up about it. Shall I have the parson up? I suppose that Miss MacFarren won't object any to the hurry. I'll tell her that it's just the way we do things here in America, if you like. It's like our quick lunch places. Courtship in the morning from ten to

twelve. Quarrel from twelve to one. Reconciliation from two to four. Marriage between four and five. Happy married life until six-thirty. Divorce court in the evening. They have to have night sessions now, because of the rush of business. All the divorce judges work overtime. There has been some talk of their striking for shorter hours. She'll think it's just a custom of the country."

Parton and the doctor explained the matter to Norah a little more soberly than this, however. Parton felt very badly about the general situation; but the prospect seemed to please rather than bewilder Norah. She said that she was quite ready.

Ten minutes later the clergyman was in his place before the pair. They had clasped hands and were standing in front of the great mirror. It had a gilt frame and fully a dozen of the shiny cupids.

Parton had just taken from Norah his first kiss as husband, and the doctor was about to claim his privilege as best man, when a bell boy came up and said that Mr. MacFarren was below and had sent word that he wished to have Miss MacFarren come down to see him.

Norah spoke up quickly.

"Tell him," she said, "that Miss MacFarren is not here."

"Beg pardon, Miss," said the bell boy, who had not recognized the hymeneal atmosphere, "I'm sorry, but the clerk has already said you *was* here."

"So I am," said Norah, "but you can tell Mr. MacFarren that Miss MacFarren isn't, and is never coming back. If he wishes to see me, why, he may come upstairs; but *I* am Mrs. Henry Parton!"

"Yes'm," gasped the boy, and vanished.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

MR. MACFARREN LEAVES THE ROOM

Never say another man's a beatin' of the harbor laws, unless you're mighty sure about your own clearance papers.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

After the boy had gone downstairs to Mr. MacFarren with her message, Norah wept a very little, with her face hidden upon her husband's shoulder. Mrs. Burgee had gone to the window to look out, and the doctor had retired, discreetly, to the hallway, where he walked up and down with a keen eye on the elevator entrance. He met MacFarren there as he stepped out of the elevator. The old man was very much agitated, and wore a look of incredulity and rage that made his mean little face seem even meaner than it was by nature. The doctor nodded to him. MacFarren stepped up to him, nervously.

"Ah, doctor!" he said. "What is this absurd story that the bell boy has been telling me?"

"I don't know," said the doctor, "I didn't hear him tell it."

"He said that there had been a marriage here," said MacFarren.

"That," said the doctor, "was not an absurd story—it was God's own truth."

There was another man with MacFarren, and the doctor did not like his looks. He had in his appearance an indescribable quality which savored of Police Headquarters. An instant later the doctor remem-

bered him as a man who had once or twice been at the dock to attend to the business of making arrests when the ship came in, and he nodded to him with an appearance of great cordiality. And the detective seemed to be surprisingly glad to see him. He greeted him with an enthusiasm which indicated to the shrewd young physician that he might be tired of his present company.

"Perhaps you had better go in and see them, sir," said the doctor to MacFarren. "While you are with them, talking things over, we will be downstairs getting a drink."

MacFarren hesitated for a moment, but the doctor had already linked his arm into that of the detective and begun to draw him toward the elevator.

"You won't be wanted, I guess," the doctor said to him. "Take my tip and keep out of this if you can. If that old fool has any sense at all he'll quit before he's gone any farther. When we get downstairs I'll tell you about it. If you do anything at all it ought to be to take MacFarren into charge and put him in an ice box, somewhere."

And over a pleasant pair of cocktails at a table in the hotel bar the doctor told the detective as much of the story as he thought was necessary to the kind of an understanding of the case which he wished him to have.

"Well, I don't give a damn," said the detective. "I guess he *is* a pretty crummy old guy. He let me pay my own carfare on the way up. Said he supposed the '*gover'ment*' allowed a man his expenses when he was on official business, and put the change from his own dime in his pocket. I don't believe the warrant's any good, anyway."

The doctor rose at this as a hungry bass rises to a fly.

"Why?" he asked.

"If the offense was committed in England or on the other side," said the detective, "there are a number of things about his complaint that won't hold water. The arrest ought to be made by the federal and not the city authorities, except on the demand of the federal authorities. The warrant ought to be issued by a United States Commissioner, and not a police justice. But it was given to me and I was told to come along when I ought to be in bed!"

He seemed to resent this deeply, and the doctor, learned in the ways of New York officialdom, was delighted.

"It's no affair of mine," said the detective, "but I've a good notion to tell him where he can go, and go back, myself, to headquarters and report sick."

The doctor was a wise youth in his generation. The detective's point of view was instantly plain to him. He realized that MacFarren, by saving his five cents, had lost the support of this representative of official Gotham, and he grinned pleasantly. He made up his mind that there might be lurking here an opportunity to help Parton; he told the detective ingenuously what he wanted to do and asked his advice.

"Has he got any money?" asked the detective, referring to Parton.

"Well," said the doctor, "he hasn't any cash. You see what he had he lost on the burning ship. But he can get all he wants. He can get oodles of it."

He was not at all certain of this; but he had gone

into this matter and he did not propose to have anything that he might do upset because of lack of conversational ability.

"Well, you think he's all right, do you?" asked the detective.

"I *know* he is," said the doctor, with emphasis.

"And it's likely to be a big case in the newspapers," mused the detective. "I guess Max would take it up on spec."

"Do you mean Max Kammer?" asked the doctor.

Max Kammer was a very small man with a large, smooth, bald head, who devoted his time to releasing those accused of crime from jail; husbands and wives from the holy bonds of wedlock, and attending first nights at the theatres.

"Max will take it up if I telephone to him and ask him to," said the detective. "Would you be willing to pay the telephone charges?"

The doctor grinned, and took a ten dollar note from his pocket. He said that he should be glad to if that would be sufficient to cover them.

The detective reflectively remarked that he thought it might—just about; took it, and said "Thank you."

The doctor sighed a quick, small sigh, and nodded. Ten dollars to a ship's doctor is much money. But this one had faith, and, even beyond his faith, there was in his heart the milk of human kindness.

"You'd better go and telephone, then," said he. "I'll wait for you here."

In the meantime MacFarren was having anything but a pleasant quarter of an hour in the parlor which had been set aside as a reception room for the bridal couple by the enterprising hotel management. He

had been full of wrath as he entered, and received Norah's pleasant greeting with a poor grace. Before his entrance she had had her Irish wits hard at work, and was, apparently, quite prepared for him when he burst out with an angry demand to know if the tales he had heard downstairs were true.

Norah answered him with much enthusiasm. She not only confirmed the reports which he had heard, but she asked him where the congratulations were which she had a right to expect from one so near and dear to her on this, the occasion of her great happiness.

MacFarren looked at her with wild eyes. The others in the group, who had expected something verging upon tragedy instead of this bit of comedy, gazed with admiration and withdrew a little, leaving the field to one who seemed to be wholly capable of filling it. MacFarren did not congratulate her. He was scarcely coherent. He merely sputtered, mostly, saying things that made an impotent jumble of protest. Norah listened gravely, offering no interruption, and acting as if she were trying hard to figure out some entirely incomprehensible situation. It was as if she had been surprised by a totally unexpected contingency. That MacFarren was other than delighted at the fact that she was married and happily off his hands was, it seemed from what she said and her general deportment, quite too impossible to be believed for a moment. She interrupted one of his most hopelessly infuriated and involved protests by going to him as if he were merely overcome by inability to express his joy.

"Don't try to talk, darlin'," she said with that delightful drawing of the r which added so great a

charm to her slight and wholly unspellable Irish accent, "wait until your joy cools down a bit. You'll be able to tell me how pleased you are, more plainly, then."

This had the effect of making him incapable of speech entirely. For a moment it even stopped his sputtering, but he grew dangerously red in the face. Norah approached him prettily and said as she puckered up her lips,

"Sure, and aren't you going to kiss the bride at all?"

Parton and Mrs. Burgee, who had withdrawn toward the windows, were divided in their emotions. A strong tendency to laugh was curbed by the real seriousness of the situation. Parton had at first intended to attend to MacFarren's case himself, and there had been pleasant thoughts of violence in his mind; but Norah told him with a glance that the old man, for the moment, was her game. It was as if she begged of Parton to keep away, and so he did so. MacFarren, making no coherent answer to her question and showing no disposition to take advantage of the puckered lips which were placed so invitingly near to his own rigidly set mouth that he would scarcely have had to stoop in order to meet them, Norah dropped them and turned smilingly toward the others.

"Oh, th' poor man!" she said, with a delicious and wholly calm and collected wink. "He's too overcome to kiss th' bride. But it's joy that never kills, so don't be fearing that we'll lose him—yet!" She moved a step toward Parton. "Still," she said, mischievously, "I'll never let myself go without a kiss entirely, and if he won't give me one, why I'll

have to find some one who will." Whereat she kissed Parton roundly on the mouth. This so augmented the fury of her step-father that he sat down precipitately and stopped sputtering.

For a moment this silence continued unbroken by any of the inmates of the room. Then MacFarren started to speak, at which Norah at once went nearer to him and assumed an attitude of respectful attention. Had she not done this he might then have been able to express his mind, but the mere action on the part of his wilful ward was quite too much for him and he became instantly incoherent.

"Don't try to talk, dar-r-rlin'," she said caressingly. "Don't try, if it hurts you so. It's your emotions that are overcomin' you."

He gnashed his teeth in impotent rage as he saw the smile of sweet consideration that was on her face.

"It's *such* a shame," said Norah, "that you were too late for the ceremony; but I knew, you see, that I couldn't marry him too quick. There was the chance that he might get into trouble or something, with some wise man like yourself, and, as I love him, I couldn't bear the thought of him in trouble and me not his wife at all. 'Twas that that made me hurry things a bit."

At last MacFarren found his tongue.

"You must have gone insane," he said.

"Sure," said Norah, "perhaps that *was* it—but, faith! it's charmin' madness."

MacFarren became scornful with a slight tendency toward commiseration.

"Do you think that such a marriage will hold?" he asked, with what started as a sneer but degenerated into a snarl.

"It'll hold *me*," said Norah gayly. Then she looked at Parton playfully and added, "If it don't hold him I'll have the law on him."

MacFarren had to some extent regained his composure when he spoke again.

"Well, Norah," he said, with the air of a wise guardian whose ward has been led astray, "you have made your bed and you must lie on it, I suppose, unless I manage to rescue you from it in some way. There is a question whether the laws, even of this new and somewhat loosely governed country, will sustain you in a marriage made without the consent of your legal guardian; but aside from the fact that you have taken the step without my consent, without in any way consulting me concerning it, I must, of necessity and as one who has loved you and served your interests faithfully, deeply regret that you should have linked any part of your life to this man, who has violated laws that all countries must uphold and respect, and so has laid himself, through his own wilful and inexcusable conduct, liable to a term in prison."

Every one in the room had listened very attentively to MacFarren while he had been making this speech. It was the threat which Parton had expected and which he did not exactly know how to meet; but which he no longer feared as he had feared it in London. There came into his eyes that same steely glitter which had made the mate of the *Lydia Skolfeld* turn away in affright. The weakness of his illness seemed to vanish utterly. He rose and walked toward the barrister. The two women saw that strange glance at the same time that MacFarren caught sight of it and it would be hard to say who

of the three was most frightened by it. Mrs. Burgee caught Parton by the arm; but this circumstance apparently had no more effect upon him than might the casual lighting of a mosquito on an elephant have on the plans which that sagacious animal had formed in its own mind. Norah drew in her breath quickly, and started to step between the two men, but then, lost in that admiration which those of her blood always have for brave men and good fighters, drew back, not pleased, but fascinated.

But the two women need not have been disturbed. There was no danger that Parton would do bodily harm to MacFarren while that cautious gentleman had legs under him on which to get away.

He rose nervously and, in a great hurry, barricaded himself behind a large centre table. His face was white enough to have justified the thought that the marble slab which topped that piece of furniture was about to fulfil that other purpose for which marble is so generally used, and act the part of tombstone while he filled the rôle of corpse.

For an instant Norah gazed with a sort of delighted terror at her brand new husband, and with an equally fascinated contempt at the man who was shrinking from before him.

Neither spoke a word. MacFarren dodged away from the centre table and actually cowered in a corner as if he wished to hide from those advancing eyes. Matters had come very near to a forceful climax when he broke down completely, and looked about the room as if he intended to try to scuttle from it like a frightened rat.

It was then that Norah ran the few steps that separated her from her husband and placed an appealing hand upon his arm.

"Don't strike him, Henry," she said richly, "though I'd dearly love to see you do it. He would die of fright and then we'd have to see about his funeral, and that would be a nuisance so soon after we've been married.

MacFarren threw at her a glance of horrified amazement. He was learning about things rapidly that day!

Another diversion came at almost the same moment, in the form of a bell boy with a little note from the doctor to Mrs. Parton. She looked at it a moment, puzzled, and then laughed blushingly. It was the first time that she had seen her name thus written. This took the tension of the situation away from every one except MacFarren. The note told her of the arrival of the lawyer whom she had asked the doctor to send for.

"Wait a bit," she said to Parton. "I've just to run downstairs a moment to see some one that I asked the doctor to send for a little while ago. It's some one that the doctor thought I might consult about a certain matter. I'd hate to miss the shindy. Postpone it, darlin', till I come back."

Parton's strained countenance relaxed. Norah's smile was roguish. MacFarren took a long breath of relief and there came over his face a comical look of having been saved from imminent danger. Norah waved a hand toward him to call Parton's attention to the humor of this look. The young man glanced at the elder one cowering in the window, and grinned in spite of everything that had gone before. At this MacFarren rose and started toward the door. Norah stepped before him.

"No," she said, sweetly, "you'll not be goin' yet,

I hope. Please stay. I've some one whom I want to have you talk a bit to before you're leavin' us entirely."

And she added, quickly:

"But that will be right soon, I'm thinkin'."

Parton was as plainly puzzled by this new move of the extraordinary young woman as the rest were; but that he felt an abiding faith in her good judgment was shown by the fact that he promptly stepped between MacFarren and the door, just as Norah passed out of it into the hall, followed by the hall boy. After Parton had interposed himself between the barrister and the door, MacFarren apparently lost all longing to go through it, and retreated rapidly to the embrasure of one of the windows, from which he gazed with apparently absorbed interest on the scant traffic of the side street, occasionally turning about with some anxiety to see that Parton's disconcerting bulk was still between him and the door.

The humor of the situation seemed to strike Parton and Mrs. Burgee at the same moment, for they laughed aloud so exactly in concert that the outburst might have been prearranged. MacFarren's quick and anxious glance behind him revealed nothing to him of the cause of this hilarity. It certainly gave him no new confidence in his position. It is even probable that he contemplated raising the window and calling out for help, for he seemed to be studying the fastenings which held it with some interest. It may have been this which still further excited the little New England woman's mirth, for her first laughter was followed by an outburst so emphatic that she was constrained to cover her head

with her white apron and rock back and forth with half stifled chuckling.

When Norah returned, perhaps fifteen minutes later, she was accompanied by the small lawyer with the bald head to whom the ship's doctor had telephoned. He was a very affable little gentleman, full of smiles, and greeting Parton and Mrs. Burgee with much enthusiasm as they were in turn presented to him by Norah.

"And is the—the other gentleman the—the—" the small man began with an insinuating smile, looking at MacFarren.

"Yes," said Norah; "he is indeed."

"Ah, Mr. MacFarren," said the lawyer pleasantly, approaching the astonished figure in the window recess. "I'm very glad to see you. From what this—this charming lady has told me, I learn that we are professional—professional—shall I say professional brethren? Both in the law, you know."

MacFarren looked at him dully.

"Yes," said the small man. "My name is Kammer. Max Kammer. I am a humble practitioner before our courts here. I am very glad to see you, I am sure."

MacFarren automatically took the hand that the small man extended toward him.

"I am very glad," the small man continued, "that I have to deal with a man versed in the principles and practice of the law in arranging this matter for—for Mrs. Parton. It is always so much easier for a lawyer to explain matters to and discuss them with another man of trained mind, than it is when he—when he comes into contact with the—with the crude intellect of the—of the laity."

MacFarren was evidently completely mystified.

The small man drew a chair up to the round table with the marble top and busily pulled from his pocket a number of papers, folded formally. He laid them down beside his hat and asked for pen and ink, which Norah brought to him from the mantel shelf.

"Now," said the small man, "we are all ready, I think. I suppose, Mr. MacFarren, that you are quite prepared to meet the conditions of your first wife's will, at once."

He did not wait for MacFarren's puzzled face to assume an expression of intelligent understanding; but continued:

"But of course I need not even ask the question. Certainly not. Of course not. Being in the law yourself, you will, of course, have provided for all of these matters, so that there need be none of that annoying delay and none of those detailed explanations which might be necessary were I dealing with an—with an untrained mind."

"I don't believe that I understand you, sir," said MacFarren, with such an attempt at dignity as was possible after his recent disturbance.

"Ah!" said the small man. "Is it possible! Well, well! But perhaps I should have expected that the—the excitements of travel and—and the happy marriage of your—of your ward, Mr. MacFarren, *might have*—*might have caused some slight forgetfulness on your part*, which—which would not, otherwise, have occurred. No," he added, contemplatively, "which I am *sure* would not, otherwise, have occurred."

But this time MacFarren was beginning to bristle again a bit.

"We will save time, sir," he said, "if you will explain yourself to me at once."

"Quite so," said the small American. "Yes, indeed, you are quite right. I will explain myself."

He unfolded one of the papers which he had laid upon the table.

"This," he said, with some deliberation, "is a copy of the will left by Miss Norah's—I beg pardon,—Mrs. Parton's mother. You were her second husband, I believe. She was your first wife."

That MacFarren was beginning to understand was shown by a slightly nervous look that was coming into his face.

He nodded.

"In this will," the small lawyer went on, "you were made trustee of the property. Let me see. That was quite a pleasant little property. A matter of three or four thousand pounds sterling, was it not? That would be, in our money, between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars. Not a fortune, surely, but, still, quite a pleasant little property. In cash, it was, I understand. Am I right? Yes. Quite so. It was in cash. You were to be the trustee of this property until Miss MacFarren—now Mrs. Parton—became of age. Am I right?"

MacFarren was evidently disconcerted.

"Ye—yes," he stammered. Then, suddenly realizing that he was permitting himself, so to speak, to be interrogated as a witness for the opposition without proper authority of court, he began again to sputter, and declared that such inquiries were an insufferable impertinence, and that he would not tolerate them.

"Ah!" said the small man. "That is most un-

fortunate. It will necessitate an action which I had strongly urged Mrs.—Mrs. Parton *not* to take, except in case of absolute necessity. Criminal proceedings within the—within the family circle are to be—are to be, in my opinion—deplored. It was only yesterday that I—that I urged a young woman named Flynn—Irish too, you see—*not* to have her mother arrested for having stolen eleven dollars out of a—of a cracked teapot which sat on the—in fact, on the mantelpiece in their—humble home. It always looks really unpleasant, I think, for members of a family to—to invoke the aid of the criminal law in—in arranging private matters. It always has seemed so to me. Always."

MacFarren had paled suddenly and lividly.

"You—you are impertinent, sir!" he exclaimed.

"Quite so, quite so," said the small lawyer. "That, as you doubtless have observed in your own practice, is sometimes a necessity in our profession. But we must take the bitter—the bitter with the sweet, Mr. MacFarren. I regret the necessity, Mr. MacFarren, but we must take the bitter with the sweet.

"As I was saying, I have urged Mrs.—Mrs. Parton, *not* to have you arrested. I do not—I do not say, you know, that she has a bad case—or even—or even that you do not deserve it. Indeed—indeed I may say that she has—she has, in my humble opinion, a *good* case, and, also, I should say that you deserve it very richly. But I beg you to believe me when I say that I have—that I have urged her to take no criminal proceedings. I have urged her to try, first, to recover, through civil proceedings, the amounts which you have—have embezzled."

MacFarren rose, almost with a threatening gesture. The small man raised his hand soothingly, and continued: "Oh, this is all—all among *friends*, Mr. MacFarren. I dislike to use the word, of course, but we all know what the circumstances really are, and that is the only word which will exactly describe what you have actually done. *We*, being all friends here, together, may, I am sure—may talk perfectly frankly. Among us, I think that we need not—I think I need not—that there is no necessity for me to—to change the word. Of course, I might say misappropriated, which would, perhaps, sound a—sound a little more genteel; but then—but then, you know, I might say *stolen*, which would be much *less* polite. So, Mr. MacFarren, I think that I will let the first word stand—partly out of consideration for you. Yes, I will let it stand, partly out of consideration for you. I have asked her not to resort to criminal proceedings in order to regain the amounts which you have *embezzled*."

There was such a sudden cessation of suavity in the small man's tone as he said the ugly word the second time that it made every person in the room wince. It made MacFarren sink back into his chair and open his lips slightly, leaving them open, while the small man went on. And the latter's voice did not return to that smooth, propitiatory intonation which it had had before. His manner, too, became aggressive and accusatory. His hesitations ended. He no longer repeated words in the middle of his sentences. There were no more of those deprecatory pauses in his talk. He looked at MacFarren with a stern and steely eye, which no one would have suspected could have been born of the mild orb of

sight which had beamed apologetically a moment before. He continued:

"Now, see here. You are a thief, and you know that you are a thief. Mrs. Parton has ample proof of it. She had suspected it before you began to try to rob the gentleman who is now her husband. Then, when she saw what you were up to, she began to gather legal evidence of it, and she has enough of that now to send you to a quiet life for some years to come. You have wasted and spent without warrant a large share of the trust fund which was to go to her according to the will of her mother. Your trusteeship has now ended, and you must make good."

MacFarren was greatly overcome. It was plain to see that this came to him as very terrifying thunder out of a clear sky. The small man waved a threatening finger at him—that wagging finger had more than once made men quail—and MacFarren now regarded it with great distress.

"Are you prepared to furnish your accounting and turn Mrs. Parton's property over to her at once?"

"Not here," said MacFarren, sullenly. "You know enough about this affair to know that all this property, and all the papers concerning it, are in England. You cannot bring an action against me here for an accounting."

"No," said the small man, with an unpleasant smile. "That, in one sense, is quite true. But we can *arrest* you here, and we propose to do it. At the request of Mrs. Parton, I have already had a warrant issued for that purpose, making the complaint myself as her attorney. I have it in my

pocket, and can either serve it myself, or send down-stairs for the man whom you brought here with you for the purpose of making trouble for her husband. You were trying to rob him, also. Wanted to make a clean sweep while you were at it, eh? You would have robbed him long ago if he had not been too shrewd to give you a chance. I don't believe that he acted wisely in coming over here as he did. I have no notion that your claim against his property would have held water in the British courts; but it might have given him a deal of trouble. If he had had competent legal advice, it is my opinion, however, that he would have remained in England, and would have fought you on your own ground there, and not only beaten you, but held you up to the scorn and ridicule of all who knew you. It was mighty fortunate for you that he did just what he did. It was unfortunate for him, because, in doing it, he chose a means which has resulted in the loss of the property to him as well as to yourself. Now I'll give *you* my advice, free. That is because you are a lawyer. I am charging Mrs. Parton for what I am doing for her. My advice to you is to stop all further nonsense about making trouble for him. You can drag him into court, but she can drag you out of it, and from it, into prison. I merely give you that advice because you are in the same profession that I am in. That, I feel, is one of the disadvantages of the profession. Now, as to the other matter. We are, for the sake of my client's peace of mind, and in order to avoid a scandal, willing to make some concessions. We don't know just how much you have stolen. We know that it is enough to seriously impair the value of the legacy left to her

by her mother, but, as I have said, we are willing to avoid a scandal by making some concessions."

The small lawyer paused. MacFarren, in the meantime, was struggling hard to regain his self-control. He passed through the various stages of incoherence which seemed to be necessary leaders to intelligent statement from him that day, and, at last, made a fine pretence of defiance. The small lawyer, thereupon, rose and pushed the bell button impressively. It was answered almost immediately by a grinning boy.

"Step downstairs," said the small man in a disconcertingly business-like way, "and ask Mr. Ryan, who is there with the doctor, to please step upstairs a moment to see Mr. Kammer. He will know what for."

The boy disappeared, and the small man drew from his pocket another folded document.

MacFarren weakened enough to ask the small man to delay the entrance of the detective long enough so that they might have a private talk.

"I don't care to discuss this matter in the presence of all these people," he said. He looked especially hard at Mrs. Burgee, whose amusement was still bubbling over once in a while. He also made a weak attempt at a show of defiance toward Parton, whom he had so abjectly and openly feared a few moments before. "I should like to have a little private conversation with you," he said again.

The small lawyer looked inquiringly at Norah.

"I shall do quite as my client suggests about that," he said. "Are you willing to have me give this man a private interview, Mrs. Parton?"

Norah surprised them all by shaking her head emphatically.

"No," she said, "I'm not. I shall be glad to see him where he said that he would put my husband. Sure, it seems to me that there could be no pleasure greater than to go and watch him in a jail. I'd read to him and take him jelly—just in order to keep certain that he was still locked up."

"All right," said the small lawyer, with an air of business, such as a man might use in designating the particular stall in which some interesting horse was to be placed. "I'll jail him."

MacFarren was more than ever startled by this firm and frank remark. The situation was getting on his nerves as Parton's eyes had. He who had planned to terrify and overcome was terrified. He who had threatened was beset by prophecies of evil. Again he begged Kammer to give him a private audience; begged with a cringing imitation of humility.

At last the little lawyer granted his request and they went to another room.

There MacFarren wilted and confessed. A part of Norah's property had been wasted in a foolish effort to get himself into Parliament. More of it had gone in other ways.

"And part of it," said Kammer, contemptuously, "you used in your attempt to rob the man she loved. You deposited it as security for the reward offered for Parton's capture."

"I did," said MacFarren, miserably, "but I did not know, then, that they loved one another."

He shuddered as he realized how completely he had placed himself in the power of those he had attempted to defraud. As all his physical courage had ebbed away when he saw Parton's eyes, so, now,

all his mental courage faded before the small American's plain statement of disgraceful fact. He begged for mercy. His cringing became abject and most unpleasant.

"They are determined to ruin me, between them," he said.

"No," said Kammer, "I should not put it that way. You seem to be determined to ruin yourself by imprudent criminal actions. You are not even a clever thief. That, of course, I cannot help. I can tell you, though, that any attempt at further interference with these young people will probably put you beyond the possibility of any intrigue more important than a jail conspiracy for some time. You asked me to see you here, alone, and I have seen you here alone. I am rather glad of it, for it enables me to tell you that you are a damned scoundrel. I hesitated to do this before the ladies. You are the least brave man I have ever seen, and are wholly unworthy, even of the respect that we give to the clever and self-respecting criminal. I think I shall have to leave you now, but I must warn you that any attempt to leave this hotel until you are told that you may go will be followed by immediate arrest. Good day!"

MacFarren stared at him with unhappy eyes as he rose and started toward the door. Just as his hand was on the knob, he called him back, half starting from his chair in his anxiety. All his pomposity had passed. He was very miserable.

"What can I do to prevent this—this proceeding?" he asked.

"I am afraid that there is nothing that *you* can do," said Kammer. "You would have to be a man. *That, I fancy, is beyond your power.*"

There was a flash of resentment in MacFarren's eyes for a moment; but it quickly gave way to the look of cowardice.

"Isn't there some basis on which we may avoid future trouble, Mr. Kammer?" he pleaded. "I will admit that I have been, perhaps, a little hasty in regard to—to Mr. Parton. Perhaps I have. It may be. Every one, you know, is likely to make mistakes at some time. Perhaps I *have* been a little hasty."

Kammer smiled with that bland look which had so often disconcerted the counsel for the other side.

"I thought we were discussing the affairs of *Mrs.* Parton," he said. "You know that it is in *her* interest, not Parton's, that I am engaged. All that I have to say, I have said. You have misappropriated money, and you will have to pay the penalty for your theft that other thieves have to pay. I am sorry for you. I am always sorry for a crook; but I cannot always help him."

So complete was the humility of the erstwhile militant MacFarren, that he showed no resentment of this plain talk, but only cringed the more.

"If I have used any of the trust funds," he said, "it has been as much for her as for myself. Parliamentary campaigns *are* expensive, and it may be that I have borrowed a bit from her to conduct mine. But, had I won my seat, she would have had many social and other advantages because of it."

Kammer merely looked at him contemptuously, and then burst into a hearty laugh. He said nothing. MacFarren was greatly disconcerted; but finally went on:

"I certainly intended to make all that I had bor-

rowed good, when the time for the accounting came," he said. "It has—it has taken me unawares, that is all. I had no idea that time had flown so."

"You will probably find that it will move more slowly after we have put you where you belong," said Kammer. "Old convicts tell me that it drags frightfully in prison."

MacFarren looked at him as a dog with a sore foot might look at the man who had pinched it, but whom he did not dare to growl at. He spoke hastily.

"I can—I can arrange part of it now. I can—" Kammer interrupted him.

"You are talking to no purpose," he said. "I have been instructed to proceed against you. That settles that."

"But suppose I drop all proceedings against Parton?" asked MacFarren.

Kammer grinned.

"Do you really suppose that your absurd claim would be listened to in any court of law?" he asked. "You have no ground for action against Parton. He could sue you for damages, and can arrest you, if he likes, on the charge of criminal libel. You have no hold on him, and you know that you have no hold on him. But, anyway, that does not interest me. I am not his attorney. When he asks me to take up his case, I will do so. But as for you—you have made trouble enough, and deserve to be put where you can't make any more."

MacFarren literally writhed.

"I will do anything you say," he whined.

"We will call Mrs. Parton and see what *she* has to say," said Kammer. "I don't believe that *she* will be willing to accept any compromise."

When Norah came into the room, MacFarren was sitting, disconsolately, by the table. He looked up at her eagerly and pleadingly.

"Norah," he said, reproachfully, "how can you treat me so?"

"Why," said Norah, smiling brightly, "it's just as easy! I like it. But wait. Watch for all the goodies that I'll send to you in prison. Faith! I'll never let you starve."

"You know that you'll get every penny of that money, don't you, Norah dear?" he pleaded.

"Sure I will that, if there's a law to give it to me," she said, pleasantly.

"But you don't have to go to law, Norah," he said pitifully.

"It's no hardship—it's a pleasure," said the unresponsive Norah. "I like it. Perhaps I caught the disease from you. Sure you seemed to be well pleased when you were raving against Henry and preparing to make him suffer for trying to save his own from you."

"Is there nothing which I can do to alter your determination?" asked MacFarren.

"Sure, there's one thing which you *might* have done," said Norah.

"What?" MacFarren asked, with some eagerness. "I'll do it now."

"Been honest," said Norah, quietly. "And you couldn't do it now. You can't teach an old dog new tricks—not even when he's Irish."

MacFarren sank back into his chair dejectedly. Norah settled gracefully into another, and Kammer stood by the window. There were signs about his mouth—which he took care to keep turned away.

from the disconsolable Irishman—that he felt some amusement over the affair. MacFarren guessed that, and looked resentfully at his back. He would have relished a drink of Kammer's blood; but he was careful not to reveal the thirst by word of mouth. Finally he appealed to him.

"Can't you help me to make my—Mrs. Parton—act reasonably?" he asked, with humble voice.

"So far as I can see," said Kammer, dryly, "she needs no help. She seems to be doing nicely by herself."

Suddenly MacFarren rose from his chair and went to Norah.

"What if I withdraw all charges against your husband?" he asked.

"It might save you some bother," she said indifferently. "But they'll only trouble you. Faith I have no thought that any jury would take your word for anything, after you had been convicted of embezzlement."

He gasped.

"Norah!" he said, as if her words had been a lash and had hit him in the face.

"I wonder will you be sent to Portland prison, or will they put you out at Wormwood Scrubs with the smaller thieves," she speculated.

MacFarren was almost beside himself. He appealed to Kammer.

"I can do nothing with her," he said to him. "Won't you talk to her for me? It seems impossible that she should mean to do such a thing!"

"Faith! I mean to do it," said Norah, with a sweet smile, "but I hate to stay here while you wriggle so. Can't you sit still in your chair? You

make me nervous. I'd rather read about it in the newspapers than stay here and watch you. Good-by!"

And she sailed, apparently wholly happy, from the room.

"Mr. Kammer," said MacFarren, after she had gone, "can't *you* arrange this for me in some way?"

"How much did you steal?" said Kammer, coldly. The small man knew how to be as scathing as he could be suave.

"Perhaps two thousand pounds," said MacFarren miserably, "but I didn't steal it."

"What did you steal it for?" asked Kammer, paying no attention to the denial.

"Election expenses," said MacFarren.

"Can you pay any of it back?" asked Kammer.

"I can sell what I have," said MacFarren, "and do the best I can."

Kammer brought a pen, ink and paper.

"Write a confession, and a promise to restore what you have taken," said the small man. "Don't mince words. Admit that you have been a thief, and state in detail what means you will employ to restore what you have stolen."

MacFarren looked at him with dumb pleading in his eyes, but there was no sign of relenting on the face of Kammer. MacFarren wrote. He handed the paper to Kammer, who glanced it over, calmly.

"This seems to be all right," he said, "but if you will take my advice you will add something to it."

"What?" asked MacFarren, with the eagerness of cowardice.

"Write as I dictate," said Kammer. "After you have done it, I will submit it to my client, and per-

haps she will consider the matter of dropping the prosecution—I don't know."

"What shall I write?" asked MacFarren.

"And, furthermore," dictated Kammer, "by my own desire and without duress, that I hereby absolve Henry Parton of all charges which I may have made against him; completely and forever relinquish all right and title to and in the diamonds or other property which I have wrongfully charged him with having misappropriated, agree to reimburse him, so far as lies within my power, for all expenses which he may have incurred in leaving England because of the false accusation which I brought against him there, and to make public a statement as soon as I shall have returned to London, England, declaring him to have been wholly guiltless of wrong doing."

MacFarren wrote. His hand trembled a little, and his face was very pale. When he had finished, Kammer looked at him and said:

"Aren't you pretty thoroughly ashamed of yourself?"

"Yes," said MacFarren.

"You ought to be," said Kammer. "Sign it."

And MacFarren signed.

"Hold on," said Kammer. "I think we had better have that witnessed and sworn to."

He rang for a boy, and told him to find a notary and bring him up. The clerk of the hotel came up, in a moment or two, with his seal under his arm, and the statement was sworn to and sealed.

"Now," said Kammer, "how long do you suppose that it will take you to get out of this hotel?"

"I can go at once," said MacFarren, humbly.

"All right, then," said Kammer, "do it."

And he did.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

ON CAPE COD

No matter how snug the dock is, you can't stay moored there always.
What a ship's for is to sail.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

Five weeks later a crisp autumn day drew near to its close and the waning sunshine filled the hollows of the Cape Cod sand dunes with dark, purple shadows. To the westward, the blue expanse of Cape Cod Bay rippled in the late afternoon light. To the east, the deeper, more metallic blue of the Atlantic glowed between the scrub pines. The Captain sat in a huge chair upon the piazza of his home and chewed gloomily upon the stem of an unlighted pipe. The tan had wholly faded from his rugged face, and it was somewhat thinner than it had been when he was stricken, but there were few other signs of the illness which had left him as vigorous as ever in his mind, but uncertain as to legs. Near to him sat Mrs. Burgee, busy with her knitting, and occasionally (and as if anxious not to have the action observed), wiping her eyes with the completed end of the blue sock which was under construction upon her needles. A pleasant breeze stirred the loose locks of Norah's hair, as she, seated upon the top step, leaned back against her husband's knees. She was gazing into the glimmering eastern glow; but it was plain to see that her thoughts were not on the calm grandeur of the sea. Parton himself, in a

barrel chair above her, somewhat nervously puffed the smoke from a cigar into the gentle eddies of a light breeze, and watched it as it drifted. One hand rested upon Norah's shoulder, where it caressed a loosened lock of hair. The other bent and unbent the paper of a letter which was held open in it.

The Captain was the first to speak.

"What makes me so John mad," he said, "is the idee of gittin' up at such an hour in th' mornin'. I don't care a Quincy about your goin' back there to South Africky; but it ain't civilized to expect a man—and a sick man at that—to git up at no sech hour as five o'clock. Adams! I might jest as well be back to sea ag'in! If they can't run their trains at more respectable hours than that, I'm goin' to move off the Cape. Yes, sir, I'm a-goin' to move to some place where you don't have to stay up all night in order to git started in th' mornin'. What's th' use, anyway? Hey? What's th' use? What's th' use o' livin' on th' Cape? There's Lyddy there! She'll be a-bawlin' around here soon's you're gone; an' I s'pose that woman there—that Nory that you all talk s' much about 's if she was all they was on earth—she'll be screechin' all over th' place within a minute after you git good an' gone. No, sir, by John! I'm a-goin' to move off the Cape. Don't know where I'm goin' to move to; don't know an' don't give a—I don't give a *damn!* There, now, Lyddy Skolfeld Burgee, you jest make th' most of that, will you? I don't give a *damn!* That's th' first time I've took th' name o' th' Lord my God in vain for a John Quincy Adams long time. But I don't give a **DAMN!** An'—an' what's th' use!"

No one answered, so after waiting a while he went on:

" You English folks make me mad—that's what you do. You make me mad. Us United Statesers come out of you, and I guess we didn't come none too soon. If we'd stayed with you a few years longer 'fore we wrote our Declaration, I guess we'd been jest th' same helpless, useless sort o' trash that you be. But I don't give a damn! Now if you want to git mad at me, Lyddy, you jest go ahead an' git mad. That's all. If you want to git mad 'cause I've been swearin', you git *mad!* That's all. *Git* mad."

" I ain't a-gittin' mad, Obed," said Mrs. Burgee somewhat weakly and wiping her eyes. " I guess I feel 'bout th' same's you do, only I don't put it quite that way." She paused for a moment as if considering the matter of whether she, too, might not get some satisfaction out of profane swearing. " I d' know 's it's a very bad way, though. 'F I thought I'd git any comfort out of it, I'd say it, too. But it don't seem to me that it'd make me feel any willin'er to let him go jest to say 'damn.' But if *you* want to cuss, Obed, why you *cuss*. I won't say nothin', now nor never, if you cuss about his goin'. Only—well, course, they two knows best. They know what's right for 'em to do. But it does jest seem—well, it seems hard. I s'pose it's harder yit for them, Obed, than it is for us two, though. They're goin' to be sep'rated by it. I s'pose they feel jest as bad about it as we do. But I jest as soon you'd cuss ag'in, Obed, if it don't make Henry or Nory feel bad to hear you." She turned to the young people. " Does it, children?" she asked.

" Go on," said Parton. " I like it."

Norah sat silent for a moment and then she gently disengaged herself from Parton, and, going first to

the Captain and then to his wife, kissed them both. Then she sat down again in her chair and leaning her head over until it rested upon Parton's shoulder, began to weep, quietly.

"Stow it!" said the Captain slowly. "Stow that, Nory! If you don't stow it, I'll be a-bellerin' myself. *That* 'd be nice, now, wouldn't it? You folks made me all fergit what I started in to say. What I was a-goin' to say was that you Britishers make me mad. You make me *mad!* You ain't got no eddication. That's what's th' matter with you—you ain't got no eddication. Nothin' worth mentionin', anyhow. I'd jest be ashamed!"

"Why, Obed!" said his wife, reproachfully.
"Why, Obed!"

"Well," went on the Captain, "I mean it. If Parton there 'd been proper brought up, he'd know how to do somethin' or other for himself. He c'l'd be a carpenter, or a plumber, or a farmer—or—*somethin'*. He wouldn't be jest a John helpless lunatic, wantin' to go back to South Africky to dig for little stuns. I ain't a-blamin' *you* any, Parton, an' I d' know as your wife there's goin' to be much bother to Lyddy whilst *you're* gone. But now I tell you what—it makes me—it makes me all choke up to think of your—of your bein' such a little *fool* when you was young as not to git no useful eddication at some practical trade or other, so 's 't you could make a livin' here on th' Cape without goin' off to some outlandish place or other, an' leavin' all your *folks* behind to worry 'bout ye!"

No one attempted to make any reply to this extraordinary speech, but the Captain went on, hurriedly, as if to avoid any possible interruption.

"Now don't be a-tellin' me we ain't your folks. What is a man after another man has saved his life? Ain't he that man's folks? An' what's a woman after another man has saved her husband's life? Ain't *she* his folks? And the wife o' the man that saved the life—ain't *she* everybody's folks, all 'round? Well—I jest want to know if she ain't! I want to holler! That's what I want to do! I feel—why, I feel jes 's if I'd swallered a big Tom cat! That's how I feel. An' s' if he was a-dyin' hard! In convulsions! Havin' a reg'lar John Quincy Adams fit inside my system! *That's* how I feel! You would have me tell you, an' I've told you. That's jest how I feel. An' *I* dunno's th' beast ever *will* die!"

Parton smoothed Norah's hair and grinned at her, nervelessly, but there was little merriment in the grin. She turned her head until her eyes could reach his and smiled back at him; but there was no happiness in the smile. The Captain watched them, gloomily.

"It's all right to be a-grinnin' at each other 's if I was a John old fool," he said resentfully, "but you don't seem to re'lize that this—that this John plan o' yours is hard on *me!* Don't you s'pose I know what's ahead of us? Don't you s'pose I know how these women folks of ours is goin' to go bellerin' around th' Cape here, soon's you're gone? S'pose you *ain't* got no money to speak of! Do you s'pose we don't want you to stay here with us? Do you reckon we're worryin' about your *board* bill? What are we a-goin' to do in our old age? I'd like to have you tell me *that!* Here I ain't goin' to go to sea no more, an' what *am* I goin' to do? Stay here an' wipe

the eyes o' weepin' women folks, I s'pose! *Nice* future you, Parton there, are a-layin' out for me! You don't have nothin' to say to *that*, now, do you? Nobody ain't got nothin' to say to *that*. Good reason. They ain't nothin' *to* say to it!"

Mrs. Burgee got up slowly and went into the house. When she reappeared she had her sun-bonnet on. It was the first time she had shown any signs of really breaking down under the prospect of parting from this young man whom she had learned to love so well, and whom the old Captain, now that he was partially restored to health, had done nothing less than appropriate as a sort of glorified son.

"Well, I'm a-goin' down to th' postoffice," she said, simply. "'F I stay here any longer, a-listenin' to you, I'll be bellerin' all right. I'll be bellerin' like a bull-frog jest 'fore rain!"

Since they had returned to the Cape, Mrs. Burgee had been the most cheerful of the party. Her husband's recovery had not been a matter of doubt in her mind for a moment. When the doctors had told her that day at the hotel that his trouble was due to the formation of a blood clot on the brain, which was so located that it pressed upon and paralyzed the motor centre of speech, she had listened to their long words and watched their wise looks with patient attention. When they had told her that there was not more than a chance in a million that the clot would be absorbed and he would recover, she had smiled with a supreme confidence.

"How big's that clot, doctor?" she asked.

"Oh, very small," the doctor had replied. "It isn't the size, you know, Mrs. Burgee, it's the fact that there has been a lesion of a capillary. That

means that one of the little blood-carrying tubes has broken, and that's a very serious matter."

" You say it ain't very big?" she responded, inquiringly. " Well, now, about *how* big? "

" Oh, perhaps as large as the head of a pin."

" Well, Obed 'll git well, then," she had said. " There ain't no sech little thing as that a-goin' to put my Obed out of business."

And, although the doctors had smiled superior smiles when she said that, she had absolutely ceased to worry from that moment. She had shown the tenderest solicitude and nursed the invalid as no one but a loving and tireless New England woman could nurse her stricken husband; but she had worried no more.

" The idee!" she had said scornfully to Norah. " The idee of a leetle thing like that a-stoppin' up all my Obed's mental works! It's jest ridic'lous! It's like sayin' that a tenpenny nail would stop a thrashin' machine! Guess they don't know what a brain my Obed's got!"

And it had turned out as she had said.

The old man's recovery, so far as his brain was concerned, was rapid and complete. The shock to his body had been more serious in its effects, and that he should ever go to sea again in command of a new *Lydia* was a matter of the gravest doubt. But the kindly, quaintly working brain of the old seaman was as active as it ever had been. With Norah and Parton, Mrs. Burgee had been gently sympathetic, both in the joy of their new found and all pervading love, and in the sorrow which they naturally felt because of the loss of his fortune and the necessity for separation which this would entail.

"Well, I'm goin' down to th' postoffice," Mrs. Burgee repeated simply.

Her pilgrimages to the postoffice had become as regular as the coming of the days. They puzzled the Captain some, for he assured her that there was no one who would by any possibility write to her so often; but Mrs. Burgee only smiled—and went. Sometimes she took a letter from the storekeeper who attended to the business of the mails—a letter with the imprint of the Government Hydrographic Office in its corner and bearing no postage stamp. Most of those who received letters at the little Cape Cod postoffice were impatient, and opened them at once; but not Mrs. Burgee. She waited until, on the way home, she reached a certain point between two dunes where she was hidden both from the village and her home. There she glanced eagerly at the contents of the official envelope. The enclosures had, so far, been most unsatisfactory. They had ever read as follows:

"The United States Hydrographic Department regrets that it has received no word that any vessel has sighted the derelict barkentine, *Lydia Skolfeld*."

She noticed that they were always signed with the impression of a rubber stamp, and wondered if the hands that pressed it to the paper had any notion of the misery its message took to her. In the past she had always torn the messages to bits and carefully buried them deep in the Cape Cod sands, for no reason which she could have given on cross examination. She had kept her correspondence with the authorities at Washington a careful secret, because in her heart only was there any hope that the *Lydia*, with her precious hidden cargo, still floated.

As she started for the mail this night, she mentally resolved that if she found no news there she, too, would give up hoping, and accept disaster as the others had. She felt depressed and gloomy, but, as she passed down the gravelled path between the solemn rows of box plants, she turned and smiled bravely at those who sat there on the porch.

The Captain gazed after her moodily.

"Wisht I could go down to th' postoffice," he said, presently.

There was no comment from the young folk. It was not hard to guess why. Norah had glanced up at Parton and he had noticed the look upon her face. He knew it meant impending tears. She had felt the tightening about her heart, and knew that *that* meant tears.

All the arrangements for Parton's departure for Boston, *en route* for the Cape and another struggle for a fortune in the only field he knew where fortunes might be won, had been made and the journey was to begin upon the morrow. It had been decided that Norah should spend at least a part of the time of her husband's absence with the Burgees on Cape Cod, with the proviso that as soon as Parton prospered he should send for her to join him. Discussion and investigation of her affairs had developed that there still remained to her, out of the inheritance which had been left to her by her mother, a matter of less than three thousand pounds. The balance had been wasted by MacFarren.

There had been one more conference with that interesting gentleman and his recent ward, and at this Parton had been present and had been in no danger of arrest. It had occurred a few days before, in

Boston, and its chief object had been the return to Parton of the assignment which he had given to his unfortunate mother and, in addition, the presentation of a paper, properly attested, signed and sealed by MacFarren, agreeing never to molest or interfere with the young people again in any way whatever.

The Captain's affairs had been arranged as satisfactorily as possible, and there was no doubt that he had enough to keep him comfortably for the rest of his life, in spite of the fact that he had refused to accept any insurance money for the loss of his *Lydia*. The presence of the explosive which had violated the insurance agreement and which had caused the final act in the tragedy of the fire so far as the ship was concerned, had not been known to anyone who would have revealed it to the agents; but it had not taken more than one minute's careful thought in the Captain's now recovered brain to make him decide that he could not receive a penny of it.

As Mrs. Burgee went down the gravelled pathway to the gate, the Captain gazed after her moodily. As she passed over the summit of a dune a hundred yards away, they could see that her right hand was raised to her face and that there was a handkerchief in it. They could readily and accurately imagine that it was held there to catch the rebellious tears which would come in spite of her resolution that she would do nothing which would make the parting more painful to Parton and Norah. The Captain noticed all this and said, somewhat shamefacedly:

"Well, Lyddy's braver'n I be—that's all. She's braver'n I be. I'll bet she's gone off to cry it out amongst the dunes, an' here I set, growlin' it out where it makes you two feel worse'n you'd feel if I

should keep my mouth shet. But I *can't* keep it shet. That's all. It won't *stay* shet."

He looked musingly after his spare figured wife. He was expecting the farewell wave of the hand which she always sent to him from the summit of the low sand hill when she went down the road and he was sitting on the porch. Presently it came. The thin, calico-robed figure, silhouetted strongly against the gray sand and the grayer sky, turned about and awkwardly saluted. The wind blew strong against her, and set her skirts fluttering out behind her while she was outlined clearly against the sky. The Captain—with some effort, for he was still very weak—waved back to her while Parton's hand and Norah's handkerchief were both raised before she turned her face away.

The little episode changed the trend of the Captain's thought.

"She ain't a bad figger of a woman, even now, after she has lived with me, off and on, whenever I've been to home, for nigh onto twenty year. Now is she?"

"Sure," said Norah with conviction, "Aunt Lyddy is the sweetest woman in heart and soul and face and figure that ever lived, so she is. I'm fair in love with her."

"Seein' th' wind blow her clo'es back like that," said the Captain, slowly, "makes me think of the figger-head of th' *Lyddy*." He went through the motion of rapping the ashes out of his empty pipe. "Once or twice, Parton, I thought of tellin' you to crawl out on the bowsprit where you could see it, after we'd been a-talkin' about Lyddy. When I first had that figger-head carved by a feller that made

tobacco-store Indians down to Boston, Lyddy was kind of mad because I made him put a sun-bonnet on it. Guess she wanted an Easter hat, or suthin' of that kind, to face th' world with; but I explained to her that I wanted to have her right there ahead of me all th' time, jest as I'd courted her and got her to marry me. She was married in a sun-bonnet. We run away to git married, you know. But still she didn't quite like it, an' I told her that if she wouldn't let me have her carved that way, I'd have her carved th' way most of th' figger-heads is carved —without no clo'es on at all to speak of. We wasn't but jest married then, an' she kind o' blushed at that an' hit me over th' head with a broom. She said that it would make her feel ashamed, 'specially when th' ship went into port. Said she wouldn't mind it quite so much when we was out to sea and there wasn't nobody but th' flyin' fish to spy on her an' th' ripplin' waves to laugh at her shape; but she said she couldn't noways a-stood it when we come into port. Then I told her that she could have her ch'ice be-twixt th' caliker gownd an' th' sun-bunnet an' drap-erries that was *real* diaph'nous, an' she took th' caliker. But jest th' same I put a flea into that feller's head that carved it. I made him make th' image of her as near as he could like she was one day when I see her a-comin' down from th' meetin' house. Kind o' looked as if her dress had been blowed back like, ag'inst her figger, an' showed her coast line purty fairly clear. An' then when she saw it for th' first time—I wouldn't let her go near th' yard till la'nchin' day—she blushed like fury. She said it wasn't modest; but when I told her that th' real wind did more'n that, sometimes, with her actual caliker dress, she

only grinned an' dropped her eyes an' says, 'Does it?' innocent like. Jus' if she didn't know!

"Then I tried to plegg her. I told her that it sure did, an' that it was 'cause I had made such a careful study of her model whenever I'd had a chanst 'fore we was married, that I'd made up my mind that she was th' only craft I wanted to sail with, permanent.

"Then she told me to batten down my hatch an' keep sich talk stowed until I was off to sea where there wouldn't be nobody to hear me disgrace myself an' her. Then I 'lowed that when th' wind *did* do a job like that it was doin' a finer piece of modellin' than any cigar-store-Indian figger-head maker ever dreamt of when he was sober, an' she jest batted me over th' head with her sun-bunnet and come over an' kissed me 'fore she run into th' house. After that she didn't make no more objections to th' pleasin' revelations that there was in that there figger-head, an' once or twicet I caught her a-standin' down on th' dock, a-lookin' at it, pensive an' most admirin'-like, while th' wind from th' Bay blew her gownd back. First she'd look at th' image for quite a while, an' then she'd look down an' see what th' wind was a-showin' of her own figger, without no sign of anger in her face whatever. Guess, on th' hull, she was kind o' proud of it. Yes, sir, by John Quincy Adams, I guess she was kind o' proud of it!"

The suggestion that the prim, modest, quiet little New England woman was proud of her figure seemed so absurd to Norah that it broke the ice, and she leaned back against Parton's knees in an abandon of laughter. Then she rose and went behind the Captain. She put her long, graceful arms around

his neck and lifted his face until she could reach it. Then she kissed it half a dozen times, impulsively and with Irish heartiness. It is probable that nothing of exactly that kind had ever happened to the old seaman before, and he blushed as brilliantly and stammered as foolishly as a schoolboy might have.

"Do you know what you are, Captain, dear?" she said, merrily, "You're a darlin'. That's what you are. We're orphans—Henry and I—we're orphans. But your heart is big enough for our asylum—yours and hers." She nodded toward the road down which Mrs. Burgee had disappeared. "Sure, I'll be happy with you here when he is gone—happier than I could be anywhere else in the whole world except with him. We'll sit out here and talk about him, any way, and if he doesn't write often—then we'll swear at him together. And I tell you—there'll be no John Quincy Adamsing about the cussin' that we'll give him—you and I!"

Then she wound her fresh young arms around the Captain's grizzled neck. And it was that that made the thing happen which he had been afraid of. The tears trickled down his weather-beaten face, getting into his mouth as he blustered out his protests of disgust, and clearing the air for every one concerned.

CHAPTER THIRTY

IN PORT AGAIN

You can hear the chug of paddle-wheels farther'n you can hear th' loudest steamboat's whistle. A lovin' woman's heart-throbs will reach Heaven quicker'n th' loudest preacher's voice, when he's prayin' 'cause he's paid to.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

Mrs. Burgee's walk towards the postoffice was as little pleasant as any she had ever made across Cape Cod sand. She loved that sand; but that afternoon it seemed very hard to tramp through. She loved the little pines that straggled on its dunes, but that afternoon they seemed like stunted symbols of dwarfed hopes. At the summit of the dune where she waved farewell back to the group upon the porch, she could see salt water stretching both to east and west. She loved the sea; but that afternoon it seemed to have a heartless glitter.

Many joys she owed to it; but now it claimed the sorrow which it seems to take in toll from every woman's heart that trusts it. She knew widows whose weeds were grown in it. She knew orphans whose protectors it had swallowed up. Ah! How many weeping mother's hearts she knew whose tears were of its brine! She knew poverty which had been wealth but for its greediness. But in all the years since she had known it and depended on it, this was the first time that it had played *her* false. That it was only taking back what it had given to her was no mitigating circumstance to soften her arraignment

of it that day. She had suffered from it once or twice before, but never because of it, she thought. The illness of the Captain she could hardly charge up to the sea. It might, she justly argued, have happened had he followed any other calling. Blood clots on the brain were not essentially marine in origin! The loss of the *Lydia* was not blamable to the sea, especially. She had not foundered in a storm or been wildly dashed on reefs or rocks. Fire, not water, was the element which had swallowed her. The sea, being made up of water, was opposed to fire. She did not blame the sea for that disaster. But, all the same, when she had reached a point where they could not see her from the house, she raised her fist and shook it toward the sea.

"*Drat you!*" she said, and both words left her lips italicized. "*Drat you!*" she said again. "You're greedy, like a six months' child, *you* are! 'Tain't as if the things could be of any use to you. If they was pretty things that you could toss around and wear to make your waves look nice, I wouldn't blame you quite so much. But they *ain't* pretty—yit! He told me so. He said they wouldn't be till after they was polished up and cut. You got lots o' little stuns a heap sight prettier than they be now! You'll leave 'em down amongst the shadders in yer innards, an' never give 'em any chance to even try to shine. And, by a-keepin' 'em, you're a-robbin' me. You're robbin' me of what I've longed for all my life!"

Mrs. Burgee stopped and stamped her foot there in the sand. She looked around her cautiously. Then she went, with many glances right and left to see that she was unobserved, a little distance into the dwarf forest of scrub pines. It was one of these

dead, unburied forests which Cape Cod shows at intervals. Once it had been bright and green. Then the wind had blown a great sand mountain over it and killed it. Satisfied that it was dead, the heartless wind, in pure wantonness, had blown away the sand again, and left the small trees standing, most pathetic in their nakedness of needles—in their bark all dry of sap.

It was a mournful little glade she sought in this dead grove—a hollow where she might be safe from prying eyes and listening ears. And there, in the sad stillness of the little solitude—a silence emphasized by the sorry moaning of the sea and the dead rattling of the perished limbs above her—she threw herself upon the sand and wept.

She had taken the young people to her heart with that fierce mother love which is not uncommon in bleak New England. During all the years since she had married her longing for a child had been intense. That she was to die without one, she had, years before, accepted with fatalistic but rebellious resignation. But when these two young lives came into hers so strangely and so suddenly, the tendrils of her love reached out and seized upon them greedily. As the days passed her heart had learned to pulsate with a growing love for them. Parton had told her of his mother—of how deeply they had loved, of the pain of their long separation, of the joy of his homecoming, of the sudden, dreadful tragedy of her death. He had spoken so simply and so feelingly of it all that her heart had filled with the sorrow of it. She wondered why God did such things. Why should He have kept that woman in an agonized suspense of love for years, at last crowned her heartaches with

the gloriously satisfying joy of her son's return, and then—killed her in a week? It was most incomprehensible! And then she had wondered, half ashamed, if He had chastened that other woman in order to reward—herself! She could conceive of no reason for such great partiality; but, perhaps, there might be things hidden which she did not know of. At any rate, she had accepted the largesse with wondering thanks, and wrapped her hungry mother love around Parton with a happiness so great that it had been almost fierce. And Norah! *She had never known a mother!* What could be more natural than that the yearning New England woman should take her also into the innermost holy of holies in her heart?

She had argued with herself about this growing of her love for the two young folk, recognizing its almost appalling strength and reasoned that she was foolish to permit it; but she might as well have tried to stop the tide that rose and fell along Cape Cod! Instead, she had watched with an almost breathless anxiety to see if their hearts were opening to her. She had not been demonstrative—ever; but she had longed with what seemed to her must be compelling longing.

When she had felt certain that she had been taken into their affections, she lay awake all night with a glow of happiness such as she had never known before. It had been almost as delightful as that other wealth of joy which she had felt as a girl when she had first been certain of Obed's love for her! But it was wholly different.

About the future, she had not cared—or dared—to think too much. Obed had been restored to her from the Valley of the Shadow. These two children

had been given to her from some mystery of radiance, hidden somewhere in God's un-understandable munificence!

I say she had not cared to look into the future—that was because of the completeness of her own existing happiness. I say she had not dared to—that was because of the fear that some dread thing would take her new found treasures from her.

She had ever been unwilling to discuss the days to come, so satisfying was the present. Whenever the thought that they might separate her from her longed-for but unexpected loves had come to her, she had fought it away with what was almost desperation, struggling to retain her happiness unblemished until the very end of it. She would have been forced to admit in her communions with herself that Parton's loss of fortune would make new efforts necessary which would take him from her, and that Norah would eventually go with him had she let her mind dwell on the facts, and so she had refused to permit her thinking to pass each day beyond the limits of that day.

And when, at last, the blow had fallen on her in his announcement that he must go back to Africa to fight for fortune, it had dazed her. Hers was not a demonstrative nature and she had said little of her woe; but, as she knelt there in the sand, her heart wept; she cried out, silently, and prayed.

"Oh, Lord!" she said, "what made you do it? I thought that struggle had been passed long, long ago! I'd stopped praying for a child. You wouldn't give me one when I jest ached for it, and I'm all dried up, now, Lord, and couldn't feed it; but my bosom *used* to ache for one! You wouldn't give me

one, and I stopped askin'. I wrapped my arms and life around my Obed an' th' *Lyddy*. 'Twas awful good of you to leave me Obed when you was so near to takin' him, an' I appreciate it, Lord!"

Here the little woman kneeling in the sand gasped with quick catchings of the breath, almost as if afraid.

"Maybe I ain't got no right to ask no more than jest that one great mercy. If you'd a-taken him! Oh, Lord, if you'd a-taken him, there wouldn't been no use no more! There—wouldn't—been—*no*—use! Maybe it was 'cause I asked the other of You after that—is that the reason, Lord? But, oh Lord, what did You give them young folks to me at all for, if You was jest a-goin' to take 'em away again? Do You remember all the times I've laid here in th' sand—right here, amongst these very trees—and prayed to You to send a child? And when You never sent one, I didn't complain—much! And when this sickness come to Obed and along with it, the losin'\ of th' ship—at first I felt some bitter. But after I got acquainted with them young folks that You sent because of it and through it, I says to myself, 'The Lord's all right! He's took the ship, but give us them!' And Obed's jest as fond of 'em as I be, only he's a man and mebbe don't feel it quite jest the way You've fixed it so us women do!"

Mrs. Burgee raised her head and stared for a moment at the sky. The dying sunset left in it a touch of burnished copper, and made it very beautiful. She slid over, sideways, on her knees until she was sitting on the sand with her legs curled under her.

"You can make that sky so pretty, Lord," she said, with no suggestion in her mind or manner that because she had ceased to kneel her monologue to

the Almighty had been ended. "And You change it every night. Why can't You make our lives as pretty, and then, jest leave 'em be?"

But presently the sunset lost its beauty, and she let her thoughts go back to the subject of her prayer.

"If You was a man, Lord," she said, thoughtfully, and not returning to her kneeling posture, "I'd think that You was tantalizin' mean. But that ain't possible. What are You a-punishin' me for? It wasn't quite so bad to keep th' young folks out of our 'ome so long's You kept 'em out entirely. But now that You've once let 'em in—it's hard! Can't You make it possible for 'em to stay, Lord? But, pshaw! Of course I *know* you *can!* It's only, *Will* you! You can see how he's situated. It's a foolish way of gettin' property to go way down there to dig for it; *but it's the only way You've let him know!* Now I'm goin' once more down to that post-office, hopin' that now, at th' last minute, You'll be good to me, an' give them di'monds back to him. He won't go, then. Leastwise, he won't go quite so fur. For years, Lord, while he was there, his own mother couldn't hear from him! That's what he *told* me. Oh, Lord, don't let him go so fur as that! You see, Lord, if *he* goes, she'll go, too. Perhaps not right away; but she'll go, too, and then I'll lose 'em both! Oh, Lord, don't do it! Please don't do it, Lord!"

A moment longer Mrs. Burgee stayed there on the sand. Then, hurrying in the twilight, she almost ran until she reached the post-office, half a mile farther down the road and in the village. At about the time when she had begun her strange petition, she had heard the rattling of the mail train and its long drawn whistle, and she believed that by this

time the postmaster would have performed his easy task of distributing the mail. It was the night when news should come from the Hydrographic office, and her heart jumped a little as the postmaster passed out the long, yellow envelope that she knew held the month's pilot chart, and, then, added another small one to it, also with the imprint of the office. This, she knew, held an answer to the last careful, stiff-fingered note she had sent down asking them to acquaint her the moment news should reach them of the *Lydia Skolfeld*, derelict. All her hopes were centered, now, in the finding of that hulk. The *Lydia* had ceased to interest her as a ship—she had become the casket which held the magic key to happiness, and all news of her must come through that office there at Washington.

She had no curiosity to see the pilot chart held in the larger envelope—that would take too much time in the examination to make it wise to open there—but she longed to open the small letter. That might in a few words tell her news that had become of paramount importance to her.

She nervously tore it partly open; but then she glanced about her and saw the usual evening gathering in the store. The folk who made it up showed no more interest in her than they always did, but it seemed to her that all the eyes were curious, and all the minds were wondering. She did not finish the opening of the envelope, but nodded to the neighbors, and hurried out without a word.

Nor could she muster courage to look within the envelope after she had reached the village street. She saw that darkness was coming fast, so she hurried desperately. Why she wished to go again to

her little hiding place among the pines to see what the Hydrographic Office had to say, she could hardly have explained. But her soul was filled with a great mother-longing for news that would reveal to her that the young folk might stay on—at least that no such dreadful distances need lie between her and them in the future as stretched between the hooked Cape on Massachusetts coast and the towering African promontory.

By the time she had crept again to her desolate retreat among the pines, the sun had dipped until only a dimly fading red was mirrored on the placid waters of the Bay. She gave a quick glance at it, and tore the letter open. She scarcely dared to look at it. Her hands trembled as she held it. She knew delay was foolish and that in a moment she would be unable to read good news, even if it were there waiting for her eyes; but it was hard to force them to look down at the paper.

At last she brought them to it and deciphered in the fading light the heading of the office, the date, the words "Dear Madame." Then would come the message! She dropped her hands and it between her knees where the thin calico of her skirt sagged limply. She muttered more of her queer prayer. It was almost as if she were telling God a secret and felt embarrassed.

"Oh, Lord!" she said. "I can't hardly bear to look at it. I know that it's too late for you to change it now, Lord, but I do hope that it's good news—most awfully!"

The utter inadequacy and puerility of what she had said annoyed and shamed her. She sent one helpless look up at the fading brilliance of the sky, and

then the pathetic eyes seemed to plead humbly with the sea. Then, with eyes straining in the dim light and with hands shaking jerkily, she deciphered the brief message.

"In answer to your inquiry," it said, "I have the honor to state that the derelict of a partially burned barkentine, mahogany laden, with names blistered from both stem and stern but believed to be the hulk of the *Lydia Skolfeld*, inquired for in your various communications, has been picked up off Casco, Maine, and reported to this office by the menhaden steamer *Susy*, of Provincetown, Mass., Captain John B. Sears. He notifies this office that he will tow her to Provincetown, Mass., where he will offer her for sale, for salvage."

Without a word she fell forward on the sand, and gripped handsfull of it between her tense and straining fingers. She rubbed her face down in the cool and pleasant, gritty softness. She did not weep, she did not laugh. She lay quite still and tried to think.

It was fully five minutes later that she sat up, and the shadows among the pines had deepened so that she was unable to read the welcome words again, no matter how she trained her eyes.

As she rose and left the thicket, emerging into the open road at a point where the view of the ocean was unobstructed and superb in its grand sweep, she paused to gaze upon it for a moment, as she always did. The sea is a compelling sight to some, and was to her. Out upon the water the light was still strong enough to make all objects clear, although dusk had fallen on the land. Puffing slowly up the coast and much nearer in shore than would have been safe in bad weather, was a small and grimy steamer. Be-

hind it trailed and sagged a long tow rope, and it was easy to see from the great volume of black smoke that rolled back against the opalescent evening sky, as well as from the plainly audible, hoarse coughings of the engines, that the burden at the cable's end dragged heavily.

She raised her hands and face in primitive thanksgiving toward the sky. Her eyes looked far above the horizon, but did not see the lazy, sunset-tinted clouds.

Then, stumbling as she ran, she went quickly back toward the village.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"THE LYDDY'S" JOURNEY ENDS

No matter how mis'able the v'yage may have been, we all chirk up on lendin' day.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

After Mrs. Burgee had passed out of sight the three sat almost silent on the little porch and looked out at the sea. The young people would have been unhappy had not their youth been hopeful of great things to come. To Parton the prospect of another period of strain and struggle was unwelcome; but he knew that he would start with better courage and a stronger determination because of the tremendous stake he had, now, to work for—a happy future and a home with Norah. To her the prospect was more dreadful; but she gloried in his courage and would do nothing which might break it down. Her dreamy eyes were suddenly brought to definite focus by the passage of the puffing little steamer and its low lying tow.

"Sail ho!" she called out, jumping up. "Captain, if that pine tree there were this ship's mizzen-mast and you should cast your weather eye three points aft of it" (her somewhat confused nautical slang was a ceaseless joy to the old Captain—which may have been why she used it very frequently) "you would see a sail—I mean a smoke. Shall I get the glasses for you?"

It had become one of her regular duties, since she had been an intimate of the Cape Cod house and since

the Captain had been able to sit upon the porch, to get his battered old marine glasses for him and hold them to his eyes with one hand, while she adjusted the focus with the other according to his orders, whenever anything which might possibly be of interest appeared upon the sea.

Now, even before he had replied to her, she had thrust the glass before his eyes, glad of anything which could break the moody monotony of their silence. The Captain peered, half interested.

"One turn ahead," he said, instructing her. "Now back 'her, j-e-s-t a mite. There! That'll do. It's almost too dark to see."

For a moment he gazed, interested as he always was in anything that showed movement on the sea.

"It's John Sears, and that there menhadener of his'n—th' *Susy*," said the Captain. She's towin' suthin', but I can't see what it is. Looks like a raft he's picked up some'rs."

He let his head drop back and Norah lowered the glass, offering it to Parton. He declined and she put it to her own eye for a moment.

"Yes, it's a raft," said she. "Sure the little tug's having hard work pulling it along."

"'T ain't a tug," the Captain said. "It's a fishin' boat. Don't seem jest respectable to me to fish from steam craft, but I s'pose they have to do it, now, to keep their wages paid. Wonder what old plunder John's picked up now. He's allus bringin' suthin' into port. Found Ned Briscoe's body one dark night, a-floatin' out to sea, an' brought it in next day. Took it to Ned's widder. Day or two later, after th' fun'ral he went to her an' suggested that she pay suthin' or other to him for salvage."

"'No, sir,' says she. 'I've been thinkin' for five year of gittin' some divorce lawyer an' payin' him for gittin' shet of Ned. S'pose I'm goin' to give you money for bringin' of him back to me an' puttin' me to all th' expense of buryin' of him? You c'n guess again,' says she.

"'Nother time, Cap'n Silas Ketchum lost his smack an' jest got away, he said, with his life, up near th' Banks. He rowed around in small boats till they picked 'em up. It was real nice weather, an' they had time to git lots o' food and water in th' small boats, so it wasn't what you'd call a desp'rate shipwreck. He had her insured for three thousand, and he swore that she was worth all of five and that he had three hundred quintal in her besides.

"Well, what does that old menhadener, John Sears, do, but goes and runs across that smack jest where she *hadn't* sunk. He brings her in jest bare in time for Si to stop his insurance claim. It was lucky he had time, else there might have been a nasty sort of lookin' into things. They was some holes, you know, in that smack's bottom, that looked a lot like scuttlin'—but she *hadn't* sunk! Cap'n John hadn't noticed the holes when he picked her up, and thought Si'd jest be all-fired glad to git her back. He suggested salvage to him, of course. An' Si—he had to pay it, too.

"Not long after that, Sears, he got hit one night up to Boston in a dark street, and they is them folks that thinks Si knowed who did it. Fetched him a wallop, y' know, jest for part of his thanks for a-findin' of that smack."

The sun had set and the menhadener and her tow were lost in the gray haze that softens Cape Cod air sometimes.

"I hope he ain't got nothin' now that'll git him into fights; but he is jest the Johndest man for pickin' up stuff!"

By this time they had all begun to wonder what had become of Mrs. Burgee.

"If she had to cross th' railroad," said the Captain, "I sh'd be afraid; but there ain't nothin' fiercer on th' road 'twixt here an' post-office than wood ticks an' sand flies an' mosketeers. She can handle them. I'm goin' in if you'll help me."

They had been within doors not more than fifteen minutes and the Captain was beginning to grumble, peevishly, when there was the muffled sound of hurrying hoofs in the sand road outside. These were followed by a loud "whoa."

"That's th' doctor," said the Captain. "He'd stop that horse o' his'n with a steam whistle if he could git one fastened on his gig. You'd think th' animal was deef, by John. He can't go pullin' an' haulin' me over ag'in to-day. He was here this mornin'. Guess Lyddy waited an' rode home with 'im. S' far's I'm concerned, I'd rather ride in a dingy boat with a heavy sea on than in that gig o' his'n. Motion's jest about th' same. Whenever business on th' Cape gits dull, he takes some fellers ridin' with him. They git so seasick in that gig that they have to run a bill up with him 'fore they can enjoy another meal of vittles."

A moment later, Mrs. Burgee, closely followed by the doctor, came into the room.

"Set, doctor," said Mrs. Burgee. "There they be, now. Now you can look 'em over."

The doctor glanced about the group with a good-natured grin and said with characteristic Cape Cod humor:

"They seem to remind me a leetle more of a fat stock show than they do of the hopeless ward in a hospital."

"I want you sh'd *examine* 'em," said Mrs. Burgee. "Now there's that there Nory. How'd you say she was, if I sh'd ask you?"

"Me?" said Norah, in surprise. "I've never been ill in my life. What's the trouble, Aunt Lyddy?"

Her question voiced an inquiry in the minds of every one of them except the doctor. The manner of Mrs. Burgee was strange to them, and there was a brightness in her face which they had not seen there lately. The Captain reflected as he looked at it that it approximated in some degree the brightness that was there the day he married her; but as no such glad event had occurred this day, the symptom might indicate a fever more fearsome than that which comes with happiness. He was indefinitely worried. He started to question her again, but Mrs. Burgee interrupted.

"What did you say, doctor, was the condition of that there Nory?" she inquired.

"Well," said the doctor contemplatively, regarding Norah's blooming cheeks and handsome figure with evident approval, "I reckon we can count on her to last the summer out."

"How about that husband of hers—that Henry?" asked Mrs. Burgee, persistently.

"He was sick when he come here to the Cape, wasn't he?" said the doctor, inquiringly.

"Yes," said Mrs. Burgee, rendered visibly anxious by this preliminary.

"Well," said the doctor, "he ain't sick now."

"Is he well enough, do you think, doctor, to stand a long v'yage—say a trip to Africky?"

There was a sly grin on her face as she asked this question, which she wiped away with her apron.

"No," said the doctor with a decision and explosiveness which surprised them all. "No, he ain't." Parton started an amazed protest. "No, he ain't," went on the doctor. "What he wants is suthin' to do. What he wants 'fore he goes gallivantin' off to Africky is some healthy exercise. Somethin' strong and hearty, like—like overseein' th' buildin' of a house, say, here on th' Cape. He ought to do some hard work. Diggin' for di'monds would be all right; but it ought to be done right here in old Massachusetts."

"Guess you're jest as crazy as ma is," said th' Captain. "If I didn't know you both was temp'rance an' that they don't sell nothin' stronger'n cider down there to th' store, I sh'd say you'd both been drinkin'. Lyddy, you make me feel real worried. What are you folks up to, anyhow?"

Mrs. Burgee made no reply whatever to his question; but gazed steadily at the doctor.

"You ain't told me nothin' about Obed," she said strangely. "Now how do you think th' Cap'n's gettin' on? Fair to middlin'?"

"Well, yes," said the doctor, "fair to middlin'."

"There ain't no blood clots on his brain or anywhere no more, is there?" asked Mrs. Burgee.

"No, I shouldn't think so," said the doctor, slowly. "I re'lly shouldn't say so, though he do seem to be gittin' a mite reddish in his face."

"Well, by John Quincy Adams, why shouldn't I?" the Captain demanded, bursting forth in the full vigor of his tantalized wonder over their strange actions. "Why shouldn't I git *green* in th' face or

anywhere's else on my hull body, with you two folks actin' queer like this. I'm skeert about you, that's what *I* be!"

"Is he well enough to go down to the village on an errant for me?" asked Mrs. Burgee, edging about the room in the direction of the closet where were kept her husband's sea clothes. None of them had thought that they would ever be worn by him again, and he had that very day taken a melancholy satisfaction in reviewing them one by one as Norah held them up.

"I think," said the doctor, "that he could stand that trip some better than that man Parton there could stand th' v'yage to South Africky. Has the errant got to be done, Mrs. Burgee?"

"It's too bad," she replied with great solemnity, "but I guess I'll have to insist upon his goin'. He ain't even been bringin' in th' water for me lately. Hain't been doin' *nothin'* 'round th' house."

"You ought to make him work," the doctor said. "He'll eat his head off in the stall with all you folks a-waitin' on him. Make him go and do your errant."

Hopeless imbecility was only a degree lower than the mental state into which Norah, Parton and the Captain had been reduced by this conversation.

Parton and the Captain were plainly worried. Norah's saving Irish sense of humor came to her rescue. It occurred to her that Mrs. Burgee had broken loose—that all the innate longing for fun-making which she believed was in every woman and which, so far as she could see, was systematically suppressed in the women of New England, was coming to the surface in Mrs. Burgee, and that she was, in an awkward way, making up for lost time.

Mrs. Burgee opened the door of the closet. The first thing that met her eye there was Parton's bag which Norah had packed and dampened with her tears that very day.

"First of all," said Mrs. Burgee, "I guess I'll have to unpack this. I re'lly need it for Obed to take with him on that errant. Mebbe he'll have somethin' to bring back with 'im!"

In a twinkling she had undone the straps and emptied the contents of the bag upon the floor.

"Take 'em away, Nory," she said solemnly, "and put 'em in th' bureau drawers. If we need 'em in th' mornin', we can pack 'em up again."

To Norah it seemed inconsiderate for Mrs. Burgee to toss out upon the floor the small comforts which had been packed for Parton with all the loving thoughtfulness of a bride; but her love for the little New England woman, and her astonishment over the whole proceeding were so all absorbing that she took small heed of it. The doctor sat and smiled.

"I ain't goin' to let th' Cap'n *walk* down to do my errant," said Mrs. Burgee, looking up from her spoliation of Norah's loving packing.

After she had emptied the satchel she went back into the "lean-to" for a moment. The apprehensive curiosity of the others would have found vent in a volley of questions of the doctor if she had not returned, a moment later, with an armful of simple tools. There was a hatchet, a saw, a hammer, two augurs and a poker.

"There," said she, as she dropped them on the floor beside the now empty satchel, "I reckon that'll be all the tools he'll need to take with him on that errant."

This attended to, she pulled from the hooks and shelves of the closet a great oilskin overcoat and a pair of sea-boots, a sou'wester and a long and heavy muffler.

"I ain't a-goin' to let Obed take no cold whilst he's a-doin' of this errant for me," she said, and there was a certain grimness in her tone. The Captain knew it as the same which had made protests futile in the early days of their married life when he had been ashore and she had suggested that he go to church. He was entirely aware that when that look was on her face there was no room for argument.

"Now you, Henry," said Mrs. Burgee, "you come here and help me git th' Cap'n ready."

In a few moments the Captain's thin legs were encased in a great pair of sea-boots reaching to the hips. His helpless arms were thrust into the sleeves of a vast peajacket. About his neck was twisted, many times, a muffler knit long years before by Mrs. Burgee's own untiring fingers, and a glazed sou'wester was put upon his head and pulled well down about his ears. The metamorphosis was absolute. The man who sat there in the chair no longer looked the invalid. Parton had seen him so a dozen times in storm and stress of weather on the *Lydia*, and despite the queer preoccupation which Mrs. Burgee's manner caused, told Norah so in whispered words. Even in the wheeled chair the Captain looked the sailor—every inch.

Mrs. Burgee was herself impressed. For a moment she stood silent and gazed at him with an almost awestruck admiration.

"Do you wonder he could run a ship?" she asked,

indefinitely. "Just look at him now. Nory's the only one that ain't seen him that way. Look, Nory!"

And certainly the Captain seemed very ship-shape, in spite of the fact that his illness had robbed his face of all that fine color which his years of seafaring had given to it.

"Git your sack and bunnit on, Nory," said Mrs. Burgee next. "Git your sack and bunnit on. Let's *all* go down and help Obed do his errant."

Norah, puzzled, but believing that the best thing was to humor this remarkable whim of the old lady's, started for her wraps.

"Git your hat, Henry," said Mrs. Burgee.

"Lyddy," said the Captain, almost pitifully, "be you out of your head?"

The doctor had stepped out of the room for a moment, and Mrs. Burgee surveyed the group.

"Yes," said she, "I guess I be."

She waited a moment longer amidst wondering silence. There was such an air of happiness about her, though, that the others merely gazed in great perplexity; but were not afraid. She cast a happy smile about the group, and said, with almost girlish gayety:

"Th' doctor says you're healthy, so I guess you're fit to kiss!"

With that she swooped across the room and threw her arms about her husband with an enthusiasm of caressing that was quite unlike her; but was, still, most pleasing to the invalid. He sputtered in his chair, trying not to laugh, but with a strong tendency toward the emission of silly giggles like a girl whose pleasure has a mixture of embarrassment.

From him the little woman swooped across to

Norah, who, puzzled, but affected by the contagion of her joyousness, met her full half way most heartily.

After she had emerged from the beautiful Irish girl's delightful arms, she paused before she swept toward Parton.

"Nory," she said gravely, "jest take a good look at that there Parton there. I'm a-goin' to kiss him in a minute. Ain't you awful sorry to have him go away so soon? Why, you ain't had time to find out that you're married folks yet."

This was a most surprising thing for her to say. It almost seemed like thoughtless cruelty. But Norah met it bravely.

"Yes," she said, "I'm sorry; but I'd never say a word to keep him from it. He knows what's best—and think how happy we'll be when he comes home again!"

It was said with courage; but she winked hard after she had said it.

"And to think," said Mrs. Burgee, still persisting in her painful suggestions, "that it's nothin' but them pesky di'monds that's a-goin' to take him off!"

She paused another moment and gazed calmly and thoughtfully upon the group. Then she spoke as if Parton were not there at all but she were the bearer of a message from him to them.

"But I forgot to tell ye," she went on, "about his plans. They're changed, you know. He's goin' to put his trip off for a little while. Queer, now, that he didn't mention that to you himself. He ain't a-goin'—not *jest* yet!"

Parton started to make a protest that delay was quite impossible; but Mrs. Burgee interrupted him with such sublime disregard of courtesy that he

stopped, amazed. It was the queer, exalted state into which she had evidently fallen that saved her manner from offence.

She stepped over to the melodeon.

"Nory," she said softly, "can't you play some-
thin' for us while we're waitin' for the wagon to come
up for Obed?"

She had already picked up the "Gospel Hymn Book," which was lying on the top of the small instrument. She turned its leaves in definite search. In a moment or two she had found what she was looking for and stood there with the open book in her hand. She gazed around at them all with the simple smile of a happy child. The two young people had never seen her look like that and the sight took the Captain back to days long gone while she had sung for him on the deck of his ship, and they were on their wedding trip around the Horn.

"Sing this," she said.

Norah, still wondering, but beginning to be affected with the elder woman's contagious joy, took her place on the cane-seated stool before the little instrument. Mrs. Burgee motioned to Parton to stand at the side of his young wife, and he took his stand there, with wondering eyes fixed inquiringly upon his hostess. Mrs. Burgee went behind her husband's wheeled chair and pushed him over until he was close within the little circle, upon which the lamplight fell caressingly. Norah bent over the open book upon the rack and started the simple tune she saw there.

"Yes," said Mrs. Burgee. "Yes. Play that. That's what I opened the book to. I think we ought to sing it."

The song ran:

"Ring the bells of Heaven, there is joy to-day.
For a wand'r'er now is reconciled.
Yes, a soul is rescued from its sinful way
And is born anew, a ransomed child!
Glory! Glory! How the angels sing!
Glory! Glory! How the loud bells ring!
Ring the bells of Heaven, there is joy to-day,
For a soul is rescued from the wild!"

Just as they had finished the old hymn (and it was astonishing to note the gusto with which they were all singing it before they reached the last words), there came a loud rapping at the door.

"There," said Mrs. Burgee. "They've come to take the Captain down. The rest of us will walk along by th' wagon. I guess most of th' folks down to the village will be along with us—seems to me like it sounds like a crowd out there. They'll all be awful glad—most everyone likes Obed."

"What *be* you a-talkin' about, Lyddy?" pleaded her husband.

"Oh!" she said, as if she had quite forgotten such an unimportant detail. "I *ain't* told ye, have I?"

There was sound of many shuffling feet on the porch, and many suppressed voices.

"No—you *know* you *ain't*, Lyddy," said the Captain.

"Well," she said slowly, "well, Cap'n John Sears—he come *in* this afternoon."

She paused, as if she had given reason in that statement for all her strange performances.

"Yes," said the Captain, almost peevishly, "me an' Nory see him pass, *bound in*."

"Well," said Mrs. Burgee, "did you notice that he was a-towin' somethin'?"

"He'd picked up a raft, or somethin'," admitted the Captain. "He's allus a-pickin' up somethin'. Mostly he jest wastes coal a-towin' of it. It's gin'y trash."

"What he was towin'," said Mrs. Burgee, slowly, and hiding her face behind her apron for a moment in the middle of the sentence, "what he was towin', Obed, was—was th' *Lyddy*! He'd picked her up, a-floatin' derelict!"

The Captain gasped. Norah grasped Parton's hand excitedly.

"Yes," said Mrs. Burgee, with a calm that was complete but very evidently artificial, "she's tied up down there to the dock right now. I told you that th' *Lyddy* had too much sense to sink. I reckoned mebbe all of you would want to go an' see her. That's what the folks are here for, and what I've got th' wagon coming up for."

She solemnly went the rounds, beginning with the Captain (and ending with him, too, thus giving that old mariner double measure), and kissed them with great heartiness. Then she turned to Parton.

"That's why I put them tools there in that bag. I figgered that they might come useful in your di'mond minin' business. Ain't it nice that you'll be able to go right to work at it here on th' Cape, instid of goin' off to Africky?"

And then, opening wide the door, she let the sympathetically happy neighbors in.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

THE GENEROSITY OF CAPTAIN SEARS

When a stingy man gives somethin', it's gener'ly somethin' that he figgers ain't no use to nobody—and he allus makes a presentation speech.—The Logbook of the Lyddy.

The progress from the Burgee homestead to the dock was a ceremony, and such a one as would be unlikely to be born out of the hearts of any folk except Cape Codders. Without planning or pre-arrangement, rejoicing at the good luck of the old man at their head, they fell into a strange lantern and torch lit procession and tramped through the deep sand of the narrow road toward Provincetown. They had not reached the summit of the first dune before some one of them began a "Gospel Hymn." Churches languish on the Cape, but the Moody and Sankey songs go on forever. Whether it was through chance, or, perhaps, because in the confused mind of the woman who started the singing there was an appropriateness in it, no one knew, but the song first started was "The Prodigal Child."

"Well, now, if that ain't jest *nice!*" muttered Lyddy. "She has be'n a wand'rer! We did want her to come home!"

The chant produced upon the listener the impression that the members of the procession rather blamed the Captain's ship for her meanderings, and urged her to turn from evil ways. With time marked

by the swinging lanterns and bobbing torches, the chorus swelled:

"Come home! Come home!
You are weary at heart—
For the way has been dark
And so lonely and wild,
O prodigal child!
Come home, oh, come home!"

Come home! Come home!
For we watch and wait,
And we stand at the gate
While the shadows are piled,
O prodigal child!
Come home, oh, come home!"

The fire-scarred hulk of the *Lydia Skolfeld* had been tied up after the menhadener had cast off the towing lines, at one of those great, decaying wharves which now show so melancholy at some Cape ports. There had been days when many hundred sail had homed there; but the memories of those times now seem like legends out of fiction books. Those were the days before the cod had left the Cape! There is a strange and tragic story to be told of the great hégira of the finny tribe, but this is not the place or time for it. The days when the rotting dock which was the goal for the straggling little band which followed in the Captain's wake had been as busy as any on this coast or any other had long passed by and this night the men with the lanterns tiptoed on it cautiously and teetered up and down on it with arms outspread as if ready for instant flight, in order to test its rotting planks and timbers before they would pronounce it safe for those who

bore the Captain in a big arm-chair to venture on it with their burden.

With these careful men went Lyddy and the Partons. A silence fell upon the whole large party during the investigation. The light of many lanterns showed the floating ruin of the ship beyond the rough and broken platform. The shouts which had risen from the crowd were now subdued. The investigators declared that the dock was quite too shaky to risk much weight upon it, and so the Captain's armchair was deposited for the time in the midst of a chattering, good-natured group upon the solid earth, full thirty feet away from the dismantled craft he loved so well.

Parton and Captain Sears were the first to board the *Lydia* and make a preliminary survey and investigation.

As they went on board the spirit of song again descended upon some member of the group, and a thin voice began, immediately followed by many others, among whom Captain Burgee's tremulous bass was audible, and Lyddy's quavering treble rang out clear and sharp. They sang:

"Brightly beams Our Father's mercy
From His lighthouse ever more,
But to us He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.
Let the lower lights be burning,
Send a gleam across the wave—
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman
You may rescue, you may save."

Only the Burgees and the Partons caught the song's true significance; but the others were ocean-

faring folk and imbued with that subtle sentiment of the great salt sea which ever comes to those who go down to it in ships. They knew and respected the significance of the moment to the Captain. He was meeting with his ship again after he had thought that she was lost forever. It was like the moment when a mother finds her son whom she has thought was dead! It was as if a man found there his wife after he had believed her in the grave and mourned for her—found her sick, and bruised and torn by great misfortunes—but found her! The rough Cape Codders—people of ships and loss of ships for generations, turned their faces away from the old man out of sheer consideration; they tried to make their conversation deal with other things so that he might not feel himself to be the centre of their interest and be embarrassed and confused. Their brief looks at him were shy, as if they feared that they might surprise in him some excess of emotion which he would not care to have them see.

And, indeed, there were strange workings among the muscles of the ancient mariner's face; but confusion did not cause them. There were in the heart which beat beneath that long disused pea-jacket a group of emotions which his townsfolk did not dream of; there was humming in the now thoroughly recovered brain a song of thankfulness for a boon of which they could know nothing. He was glad to see his ship again, for he had loved his ship; he was comforted in knowing that his financial ruin was not quite complete; but the bone and sinew of his joy laid in that other fact that because the *Lydia* had been found there would be no need of Parton's journey to South Africa—he and Norah could not, now,

be wholly lost to him and Lyddy! It was a full minute before he could express himself, and even then it was not talk that told his happiness at first. First he burst into a most tremendous laugh—not of amusement, but of sheer satisfaction at the turn affairs were taking. It was unexpected, and, for an instant, the people near him did not know what to make of it, but then it spread, and, presently, the whole dock rang with it. Norah wiped her eyes. Lyddy held her sides. Parton shouted with delight. The neighbors guffawed and giggled, trumpeted and tittered, each according to his or her own kind. Even Captain Sears, who was impressed by the importance and therefore the gravity of the moment, because he had a plan of self-aggrandizement in mind, yielded to the contagion of the thing and chuckled stingily.

It all delighted the old Captain. Things were going as they ought to go. He had laughed when he had been afraid that he should cry. He told his neighbors to leave his chair there where it was, while Parton and Captain Sears went on board the *Lydia*. He had been afraid that the misery of his helplessness would overwhelm him when he should realize that he could not be the first on board; but now he chuckled heartily as he gave these directions to them.

To Parton the moments had been as full of strange emotions. He had fought a battle with himself over the proposed trip to South Africa, and had won only after many mental sufferings. There had been temptations enough to make him stay away from the barren and uninviting wilderness and remain there in New England settled down to some life which might

have been colorless and commonplace without Norah, but with her to share it never could have been to him. For himself, he cared very little for the things that money could bring. He would have been content to live in very humdrum fashion with his beautiful Irish wife, earning whatever modest sum he could in such employment as his young strength and natural intelligence should make possible; but he had decided that such solution of his difficulties would be unfair to her and, therefore, cowardly. His first adventurous foray had been more for his mother's sake than for his own—his wife and not himself was to be the animating reason for his second. Therefore his heart was joyful, not so much because he hoped to find there on the *Lydia* the diamonds as because the finding of them would make it unnecessary for him to separate himself from Norah.

The two women, also, were greatly stirred by the presence of the ship. Lyddy loved the vessel which was her namesake almost as much as the Captain did, and accordingly rejoiced at sight of her. But her heart was far from being wholly joyous. It held a mixture of contentment over present events and apprehension for the future. When she had prayed there on the sand, she had only thought that if Parton should find his diamonds there would then be no more reason for his leaving her and her husband forlorn without the young folk whom they had learned to love so well. Now she realized that their recovery would be almost as certain to bereave her. That after the Partons had once regained their fortune they would be content to stay there on the Cape suddenly appeared to her as a remote and improb-

able possibility. She had not considered this before. Now it tormented her. Events had, also, suddenly another effect on her. They intensified her always tender feeling for her disabled husband, and she did a thing which had, probably, never been paralleled in the history of the calm, unemotional-in-public womankind whom she had known or who had known her. She was, herself, amazed and embarrassed as soon as she had done it. There, where everyone could see, she kissed the Captain on the lips! And all the torches on the dock blazed up just then—all the lanterns in the crowd burst into increased effulgence, it seemed to her, so that no person in the crowd might miss the startling, almost the indelicate, action as she did it! The Captain was so astonished that he sputtered, but a glimpse of her blazing and embarrassed face stopped that—and he kissed her back again with a smack which Mrs. Judson Coffin declared with much amusement sounded like a mains'l goin' in a gale. The effect of this occurrence on the other people on the dock was instantaneous. The men unanimously dodged and looked "some sheepish," as if they had themselves committed indiscretions. The women sympathized with her and smiled—but, to a woman, blushed. As for Lyddy herself—she emitted a thin squeak of surprise as she realized what had happened; but then, as it was done and could not be undone, she colored redder than a poppy—and kissed him twice again, defiantly!

By this time Captain Sears and Parton had reached the ship's side and were peering at such parts of her deck and rail as seemed to be still firm, and trying to decide where the best place to board her

would be. Norah stood back with the Captain and his wife. The townsfolk would have crowded forward had not a warning crack or two from the rotten dock told them that the weight of the assembly would be too much for it to bear. They had no desire for night baths in the cold salt water, and so retired to solid earth and sang again.

But Norah put her hand upon the Captain's shoulder and said to him, while her eyes sparkled pleasantly in the torch and lantern light and the roses in her cheeks flashed vividly:

"And, sure! Can't I go, too?"

The psychological moment had now passed for the Captain, and he was merely a very happy and good-natured person as he looked at her and grinned.

"Well, by John!" he said, quite in his old tone, "I bet you kin!"

She stepped gingerly across the shaky planks to where her husband and Captain Sears were.

"Be you a-comin' too, Miss Parton?" asked the old menhadener. "Well, you stay right there by your husband for a minute while I make a gangplank of this board here, an' then we'll go aboard. She's pretty well scorched up now, ain't she?"

Indeed, the *Lydia* did show great evidences of the fire. Even her low rail was burned amidships, although, so far as they could see, her after and her forward decks were still intact.

It was after Captain Sears and Parton had succeeded, with the assistance of much shouted advice from the onlookers, in getting an improvised gangplank securely fixed so that it bridged the three or four feet of water between the ship and the dock and rested on a portion of the vessel's rail that was not

too badly burned to make it a firm support that he yielded to the American impulse to make a speech.

He had been greatly impressed by the exhibition of popular delight over Captain Burgee's good fortune. It had angered him a little, even, for he did not understand it, but his slow wits were quick enough to tell him that this he must not show. It is impossible that the man who was so constituted as to permit him to ask a fee from a needy widow for the finding of her husband's body should understand why it was his townsmen jeered at him for so doing; but they had jeered him and he knew that he was most unpopular. This had long worried him.

The remark that a dock lounging had made just as the *Susy* had begun the voyage which had ended as she towed the *Lydia* in, had galled him deeply. The man had called out, cheerfully:

"Bun v'yage, Si! Hope ye'll have good luck this trip! P'raps you'll run across another floatin' corpse —this time, one that's left a rich widder—that can pay!"

And there was another reason why he sorrowed over this trend of public thought at this especial time. A Government commission was to be appointed to study Cape Cod's sand dunes. One native was to grace its councils at a salary of \$600 for the session of six months. Captain Sears was beginning to get old, and life on the menhaden steamer was most laborious. He wished to be that native.

He had thought much of this the while the recent voyage was in progress. The scornful gibe referring to his celebrated action in demanding salvage for the corpse came to his mind and forced him to admit that he was most unpopular among his neigh-

bors, and could not reasonably expect that, should things remain just as they were, they would help him to realize his ambitions of this Government position.

But the day when he picked up the *Lydia*, a great thought came to him. He looked the melancholy derelict over with some care and decided that she was almost worthless. Salvage for her rescue would be divided, according to the law in such cases, among his entire crew (if she was declared to be worth anything at all), and he would get but little, he reflected, at the best. It occurred to him that therein lay his opportunity for what the bleaching-boards at ball games call a "grand stand play." He could redeem his damaged reputation for generosity and general decency. No man on all Cape Cod was more popular at that moment than was Captain Burgee. The whole narrow spit of sand sympathized with him over the loss of his ship and sorrowed for his physical affliction. The other members of the *Susy's* crew were certain to consent. The loss could not be great, for the derelict of the *Lydia* was scarcely worth—he estimated—the coal it cost to tow her in.

Then, where all the people were gathered, thinking of nothing but the wreck and of no one but the Captain, was the time and there the place to "spring" it.

"Captain Burgee," he said, leaning against a wharf post and trying to make his face take on an expression as near as possible to geniality, "there's somethin' that I want to say, an' I'm a-goin' to say it. This here findin' of your ship a-driftin' 'round, gives me jest the chance that I've be'n lookin' for. They is them here on the Cape that's spoke an' thunk hard of me in times gone past, because of things I

may have done. They was especial bad feelin' over the fact that I ast the widder Briscoe for the usual fee for pickin' up her husband's co'pse. Now I think it over, I see that I was wrong to ask pay for the findin' of Ned Briscoe dead, when he was wo'thless livin'. I'm sorry that I done it. Now what I want to say is this: There is times and there ain't times for askin' salvage. I thought that the time when I found Briscoe a-bobbin' 'round out there like a cork loose from a boy's fish line was the time *to* do it. I know that now, when I've found your ship a-floatin' where the wind an' tide had took her after you, ailin' an' deserted by everybody except Mr. Parton here, had been forced for to abandon her, is the time *not* to do it. It ain't never goin' to be said that John Sears took advantage of *any* feller's misfortune, when that feller was a decent feller and there was any way of keepin' out of it. Now you folks know as well as I do what claims for salvage me an' my men might make ag'inst this ship an' whatever may be left in her. Well, we ain't goin' to make *no* claim! That's all there is to that. That's all there is to that. Most of us has knowed Cap. Burgee for quite a spell o' years, and likes him. There ain't goin' to be no charge, an' there ain't goin' to be no claim made. I'm powerful afraid that th' *Lyddy's* mostly gone—an' there ain't a man on th' Cape that don't know that she was among th' best in her class an' in her time—but what there is left of her and what there is left of what there was in her, is all yours, Cap. Burgee. An' me an' my men—we're all consid'able glad to say so. Ain't we, boys?"

The three members of his crew were present, and they manifested their approval of what he said in.

three awkward and shamefaced ways—although it is probable that their generous sincerity was at least as great as was his own. The other people on the dock, amazed at this from the penurious Sears, were at first quite speechless, and then broke into a jerky cheer. It was, as it were, literally yanked out of them by their surprise. It rose in spasms.

Captain Sears, flushed by this spectacular success, went on:

"After we had picked her up and while we was a-comin' into port, we talked this matter over. And, in order that there couldn't be no mistake at all about it, I made out a paper. We signed it and we was glad to sign it. It transfers our claims to you, an' we don't reckon that you are a-goin' to sue yourself for salvage. If you'll jest step for'ard here a little, Mis' Burgee, I'll hand the paper to you. I've got it right here in my pocket."

Mrs. Burgee stepped forward, and Captain Sears did hand the paper to her. She took it to her husband. All he could say was, "Thank ye, Captain Sears, I thank ye!" But the fist that stole up to his eyes, trembling, a moment later, testified that there was much more which he thought but could not say.

Captain Sears unquestionably had the people "with him," now. There was not a person there who really believed that he had given up anything worth much—they had looked the *Lydia* over with expert eyes; they knew that under less loving care than Captain Burgee had given her she would have been classed as a "once-waser" * at her best, and that now, fire-scarred as she was, no admiralty court

* The term "once-waser" has long been used on the Cape to describe what is known in new New York slang as a "has-been."

would award her rescuer much of anything for towing her into port—but any exhibition of generosity was unexpected from Sears, and one which had for its beneficiary the much beloved Burgee was certain to make a deep impression upon the small public to whom both were known. If Sears had stopped there he might have done much more than he had done to restore that popularity which had passed with the Briscoe corpse salvage incident. But he was only half clever as a politician. His instinct ceased to work before it had shown him how to take advantage of all of his opportunities. This was shown by the fact that he continued, saying:

"And now, feller citizens, I hope there ain't none here as thinks hard o' me no more. An' I hope that when my claims is properly presented to th' Gov'ment, there ain't none as will oppose my gittin' on th' Cape Commission."

Mostly the simple minded folk there present were properly impressed. Mostly they felt that they had wrongly judged him in the past, and that if, in order to make up, they could help him in the future, they would do it; but there was one old grizzled sea-dog who spat tobacco juice and said:

"Yah! I thought there was a current runnin' that didn't show up on th' surface! If he reckoned there was as much in salvage on th' *Lyddy* as there is in sal'ry on th' job, he wouldn't be so gosh-darned generous! When some folks asts ye to sail in an' take a bite out o' their red apples, ye'll be clever if ye makes a careful squint for wo'm holes!"

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

AGAIN THE CARGO OF THE "LYDIA"

Ain't God clever? Look at all th' new ways He finds of punishin' th' wicked, an' givin' goodies to th' good! Don't they make our prisons an' our penalties, our presents an' prosperities seem jest foolish?—*The Logbook of the Lydia.*

No other means of shipwreck ever can give a ship so desolate an appearance as can fire. The stump of the *Lydia's* foremast still stood, but it gleamed no longer with that rich yellow of its Norway pine which it had been the Captain's pride ever to keep shining over all of it. The upper end was charred and ugly. The mainmast was entirely gone, and that part of the deck in which it had been stepped was also torn up and destroyed. A great hole with charred edges where the explosion had torn the planking up had given the fire free chance to eat its way and yawned gloomily.

Fore and aft the ruin was much less complete than it was amidships. The rain had evidently started in before the flames had had a chance to eat deep into the solid timbers, and there were spots around the edge of the jagged rent there in the deck which showed the fresh yellow of the pine as it was torn by the explosion, where it had not been at all blackened by the fire or smoke.

The entrance to the cabin companionway was charred; but held its sharp edges. The greater part of the exterior of the deck house was not burned,

although the paint on it was faintly clouded by the smoke, and, in some places, yellowed and blistered. Parton remembered with a shudder how intense the heat had been and how dense the smoke had rolled. He was astonished because the damage had not been greater. The wheel was not burned at all, and, at the stern the bulwark was still fresh and bright in strong comparison to the amidships ruin.

Forward of the great central gap, Parton, as he peered, could see the *Lydia*'s big water-tank still standing, but the after end was quite blown out, and as he looked at it he realized the significance of the lesser explosion which had followed the great detonation of the Humberite. It had been the noise of the bursting water tank that he had heard. Heated until there was not room enough in it for both its water and the steam which the roaring fire had generated, it had exploded, and helped to put the fire amidships out by pouring its deluge of fresh water directly on its heart through the very hole which the explosion had torn for it, as if with the idea of offering means for undoing its own fell work.

Parton longed to run forward and below at once in order to find whether his diamonds were safe or not; but he curbed his impatience for many reasons and went with Norah and the Captain down into the cabin of the ship. There everything was about as he had left it at the time of his stumbling flight with the Captain in his arms. Norah passed down the companionway and into the little compartment almost timidly and behind the two men. Their lanterns showed the disorder of the interior, and she gasped as she looked at it. Captain Sears went over to Captain Burgee's berth.

"This here was Captain Burgee's, wasn't it?" he asked.

Parton nodded. Captain Sears gathered up some of the clothes which were still hanging against the bulkhead at the back of it, and taking an armful of them, carried them over to the cabin table and laid them down on it.

"Guess we might as well use Cap. Burgee's oil," he said then, and laughed uneasily. He was often almost ashamed of his own little stinginesses. He lighted one of the cabin lamps and turned his own lanterns down immediately. Norah glanced at Parton and they smiled a little in spite of the tension of anxiety which was oppressing both of them. But the big reflector behind the lamp threw out an ample yellow beam which helped materially in getting things together. While he was taking the clothes from the berth, Captain Sears noticed Captain Burgee's big silver watch hanging against the bulkhead.

"Well, if there ain't Cap. Burgee's watch!" he said in great astonishment. Then he looked around. Hanging in its place was the ship's chronometer. "Well, you must 'a' be'n in a *hurry!*" he exclaimed.

These valuables made his mind turn to the salvage he had given up and he sighed softly.

"We were," laughed Parton.

Then, going to his own berth, Parton called Norah, who had been helping Captain Sears to fix Captain Burgee's clothes so that they might easily be tied into a bundle. Together they gathered out of it such of his own belongings as they found there. Among them was *his* watch. He handed it to her and she placed it in her pocket with a shudder. It brought vividly to mind the tremendous stress which

must have driven him from the ship that afternoon.

But the strain of working here in the cabin at such unimportant matters was too much for Parton. For some reason which he did not clearly express to himself he felt that it would be unwise to tell Captain Sears about the treasure in the hold, and he had resolved when he had come on board not to show his anxiety about it. He knew that his interest in the cargo of the ship below decks would be surprising to the villagers, and he had no desire to arouse their curiosity.

"I guess you're right glad to get back what you had on board," Captain Sears was saying to him, as he watched him pull some papers from a shelf above the Captain's berth.

"Yes," said Parton, "I am."

He hesitated for a moment. Then he said:

"While you are in here, I will take a look below so that I can report to the Captain about the condition of the hold. He will be anxious to know what shape his cargo's in, and I—have a few little things down there that I want to see about, myself."

"I'll be with you in jest a minute," Sears said. "I thought I'd jest unscrew this here chronometer. Captain Burgee allus *would* have the best they was. This here one cost him pretty near five hundred dollars. He'll be right glad to see it ag'in."

It was easy to see that it hurt him to have thrust upon his mind the bits of salvage which might have come to him; but which he had renounced.

Parton had several times mentioned to Norah the Captain's logbook, and had quoted to her certain quaintly philosophical entries in it which he remembered. He was anxious to find it, feeling certain

that the old man would be especially pleased to get it back again, but he could not discover it anywhere about the cabin and was about to abandon the search for it when Norah, who had been tying the clothes which Captain Sears had placed upon the cabin table into bundles, came across it. She waved it at Parton.

"Faith! Here's a blank-book," she said. "What is it? Shall I take it to the Captain? It seems to be filled with his writing."

She opened it and read:

"'Th' things we might a-got an' didn't, allus grow in our remembrances as time runs on. It's the old story of the fish that bit our bait an' then swum off. My, what a big one!'"

The message seemed to have been written with Captain Sears's precise trend of thought in mind. That ancient seaman had been gradually growing to regret more and more his deed of generosity in regard to the salvage on the *Lydia*. And now this came to him almost as if he were looking into the future and saw clairvoyantly that he would regret with increasing bitterness the impulse which had made him resign his legal claim. The sight of the watches and the chronometer had worried him—now this extract from the logbook came to mock at him.

Norah continued to read from the small volume:

"'I've ast Lyddy a dozen times if she wasn't sorry she hadn't married someone else. One day she said: "Well, there *was* Yank Coffin!" My! That rankled in my bosom! And I was real unholly glad when I saw in th' paper—I run most all th' way from th' post-office to read it to her—that Yank had been hung out in Injun ter'tory for th' stealin' of a hoss or two.'"

Captain Sears brightened up as she finished, and she and Parton laughed. But they had no idea of what had been passing through his mind.

"What is it?" she inquired, waving the book gently in the air. "Shall I take it to the Captain? It seems to be filled with his writing!"

Parton laughed again.

"Yes," he said. "Be sure to take it to him. It's the logbook of the *Lyddy*. It tells more of personal philosophy than it does about the ship's progress or the condition of the weather, though. There surely's not another logbook like it on any other ship that sails the North Atlantic. Be sure to take it to him."

She put it in the bundle. It had given Captain Sears comfort, though, at a time when thoughts about the salvage had put him in sore need of it.

A moment later Captain Sears had unfastened the chronometer and announced that as soon as they had taken what they could carry out to the Captain, he would be ready to make an inspection of the ship's hold.

When they went on deck again they examined the planking to see if they could safely try to go over it to the forward hatch. They decided that they could scarcely depend upon it, and so they picked up their bundles again, and passed over the gang plank to the dock. There they placed in Captain Burgee's lap and on the ground beside him and around him such small things and bundles as they had taken with them from the ship. The old man regarded this treasure trove almost with tenderness, and hugged a bundle as one might hug a child. His wife, too, touched the things with evident affection.

"Is she very bad et up there in th' cabin?" asked the Captain.

"Well," said Captain Sears, "her woodwork ain't quite so han'some as it used to be, if I remember right, but there re'lly ain't much the matter with her aft except smoke damage. I reckon th' wind must have set so's to send th' fire for'ard more'n it did aft."

"The burning of the rigging changed the set of the sails a moment or two before they went," said Parton, "and turned her tail to the wind. You see the mizzen canvas was the first to go, although there was little fire below there."

"You can't never tell what a fire'll do at sea," said Captain Sears. "Th' water from the big tank helped some after it had busted up, I reckon."

"And everybody laughed at me when I had that tank put in," said Captain Burgee, comfortably. "I hadn't no thought that it would ever act as a fire extinguisher, though—I jest wanted to have lots of good fresh water, because I was stuck once without enough and found how thirst tastes."

"I reckon th' explosion helped some, too," said Captain Sears. "It looks to me as if mebbe when it blowed th' deck up, it kind of blowed the fire out!"

"By John Quincy Adams!" said the Captain. "Well now!"

He was very happy.

Lyddy, also delighted, started toward the ship as if to see its details closer. The Captain called to her to come back to him.

"Lyddy," he said, "you come right back here an' hold my hand ag'in, by John!"

The crowd snickered—but they "felt for" him.

She went back, blushing, and at heart greatly pleased, although she pretended to be scandalized by his "nonsense 'fore folks!"

"Why, Obed!" she said. "What doin's when everybody's lookin' on!"

"I know," he said, "but I be'n a-holdin' of your hand behind their backs for quite a spell o' years, and now, by Quincy! I gbt to hold it 'fore their faces unless they choose to turn away and find out what th' weather looks like. Now th' *Lyddy*'s tied up to her dock ag'in, ain't you willin' that her commandin' off'cer should tie up to *his* dock?"

And he added:

"Then we'll *both* feel safe, by Adams! Me and her!"

Mrs. Burgee laughed a little, but she did not take her hand away. Even when Norah, who had both arms full of bundles from the wreck, deposited them in the Captain's lap, Mrs. Burgee investigated them, despite her great curiosity as to what they held, with one hand only. The other was held tightly in the Captain's.

"We're goin' down for'ard, now," said Captain Sears. "Mr. Parton says he mebbe has some stuff down there. He says he reckons he knows where it is, ef it ain't be'n took away, an' I tell him that nothin' ain't be'n took away since we had anythin' to do with your ship."

This remark brought the diamonds very quickly and very vividly back to the minds of the four folk who knew about them.

Mrs. Burgee and the Captain exchanged quick glances, and he felt her fingers tighten almost convulsively within his own. Norah smiled at Parton, and he felt a thrill of excitement creep along his spine.

"Well," said Captain Sears, who was, of course,

quite ignorant of the especial interest which all the other members of the little party felt in the outcome of the proposed expedition, turning to Parton, "if you're ready, I be. I guess your wife hadn't better try *that* trip. It won't be pleasant. I wouldn't be surprised if, when we got below, we should find consid'able water in her. Mebbe we won't be able to git around much."

"Oh, please let me go," said Norah.

"Oh, if you re'lly want to," said Captain Sears, "I reckon you *kin*. I was only thinkin' that mebbe it wouldn't be pleasant for you, that *was all!*"

And when the party left the Captain and started toward the ship again, Norah was the third member of it.

NOTE: An instance of this kind occurred in 1892, when the British ship *Siamese* was abandoned when on fire. She carried a large quantity of high explosives. Ignition resulted quite as Captain Burgee suggests was the case on the *Lydia Skolfeld*. It blew the fire out, while it blew a part of the ship into fragments. This would be unlikely to occur—indeed, it would probably be impossible if the explosive were straight gunpowder; but with Maximite, Humberite or any one of half a dozen of the other new, high-power, quick-burning explosives, it is not out of the question, by any means. By reason of the very rapidity of the combustion—a rapidity so great that it must be seen to be appreciated—the chemical fire is ended for lack of material, before it has time to ignite a slow-burning substance like wood, while the atmospheric disturbance accompanying the explosion may well be believed to be so great and so sudden as to act on surrounding flames as a quick breath acts on the blaze of a burning match. Such was the scientific explanation of the fact that fire did not follow the explosion on the *Siamese*, and if the fact that the fire on the *Lydia Skolfeld* went out before it had entirely destroyed the ship cannot be thus explained, then how can it be explained? The fiction remains that it did so go out!

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

A MATTER OF PUNISHMENT

'Ain't God clever! That's one reason why I think the Methodists is all wrong, in figgerin' out the details of eternal torment. They don't give God no credit for His originality an' brains. Th' Tephet that their preacher-men describe is only what a very ordinary man, not over bright, would cook up for th' people that ha hated. God knows ten thousand ways of punishin' th' wicked that beats their Hell all holler. An' as for rewardin' of the good, man gits Heaven right here on earth when his wife is lovin', or a woman when her husband re'ly cherishes and is a good provider. Sech things'll go a Methodist Paradise at least a dozen better an' not try more'n half.—*The Logbook of the Lydia.*

When they reached the hatch and examined it by lantern light, a detail attracted Parton's attention and worried him. He felt sure that the hatch had been battened down and clamped when he had left the ship. Now he observed that the clamps were gone—only one of them was in sight and that had slid loosely to the scupper—and the box edges of the hatch were not fitted closely over the raised edges of the opening. The hatch had certainly been tampered with, either when the mate had returned to the ship while the fire was in progress, or by strangers, after the *Lydia* had been abandoned by her crew. And Captain Sears declared that none had been below since he had found her! It sent Parton's blood rushing to his face and made his heart beat fast. What a sarcasm of Fate it would be if it should turn out now after MacFarren's claim had been overcome and he had gone home like a whipped cur, after Parton had escaped all the perils

of the eventful and disastrous voyage, and after the *Lydia* had been brought to the very port which was nearest to the place where he had been sent by fortune after his disaster, if the mate had succeeded, after all, and borne away the diamonds. The fact that the mate's boat had never been reported made his mind turn quickly to this gloomy view. Both the others had been reported as having been encountered by passing vessels. Parton had charged this in his mind to the effects of the explosion. He had thought that the concussion had shattered the *Lydia* completely, and that the mate's boat, which had been close to the wreck as he knew at the very moment of the explosion, must have been overwhelmed and lost in burst of fire and crash of falling spars; but now the circumstance that the hatch had so certainly been tampered with after his own flight from the apparently doomed vessel came as a great shock to him and seemed to upset all his theories. For a second he felt a dread of going farther in the investigation for fear of the disappointment which might be revealed in consequence. Then the thought came to him that if the mate had really gone below, secured the diamonds and escaped, he would scarcely have taken the time and trouble to replace the hatch before leaving the burning vessel, and he decided that it must be that the man had only made an effort—that he had returned to the ship with the intention of searching the hold, and had gone so far in his work as to achieve the removal of the clamps, but had been driven away by fear of the fire before he had accomplished anything more serious.

At last, through their combined and powerful

efforts, the hatch was slid farther to one side. But as the dark hole yawned in front of them, Captain Sears, with an exclamation of disgust, recoiled before the foul air that poured out of the opening. Norah, who was leaning forward to peer into the black pit, at the same time retired precipitately with a little scream of repulsion, and Parton himself stepped quickly back a few feet to get away from the distressing odor.

"Rats!" said Captain Sears. "They say they allus leave a sinkin' ship; but I reckon from the smell that they didn't calc'late that the *Lyddy* was a-goin' to sink. I guess they ain't got no special ability to tell when the vessel that they're sailin' on is goin' to ketch fire. Phew!"

It was evident that to descend into the hold would be impossible for some time, and, while they were waiting for the air to clear Parton reluctantly followed Sears into the cabin again, and for three quarters of an hour they busied themselves carrying small articles from it to the wagon which had brought Captain Burgee down. Norah joined Mrs. Burgee, and refused to board the ship again. Both she and Parton thought that the old man ought to be taken home; but he refused to leave the dock until the hold had been looked into. And, indeed, the events of the evening had not, apparently, overstrained either the mind or body of the old sailor. He chatted gaily with his neighbors and was touchingly glad to see his ship again.

During the period of waiting, Parton gave much thought to the matter of Captain Sears's relinquishment of all salvage claims. That the old seaman should refuse to take any part of what he might

have saved to Captain Burgee was not a matter which Parton felt should be brought into question. It was, he thought, an exhibition of natural and very admirable fellow feeling which might well be left as it was. But that his generosity should be permitted to rob him of his legal share in the hidden diamonds seemed unfair. Of course he had already decided that an equitable reward should be given to the men-hadener for towing a ship with such a valuable cargo into port; but there still remained the question of the justice of letting him blindly resign all claim to a treasure so considerable as that which Parton had hidden in the mahogany log. Finally, just as they were starting toward the hatch again to see if the air had sufficiently cleared so that they might go down into the hold, he spoke to Captain Sears of it.

"I ought to tell you that I hope that there is certain property of mine there in the hold which I value very highly, Captain Sears," he said. "I want to say that I realize that I shall owe its recovery to you if I find it safe, and that, despite the fact that you have resigned your salvage, I shall be certain to make some suitable arrangement for paying you for what you've done for me."

"Don't you worry about me," said Captain Sears, still buoyed up by the grandiloquence of his recent speech, and anxious to maintain his position of exalted generosity. "I guess you and me won't have no quarrel. I ain't one to take advantage of no man's misfortunes. People done a lot o' talkin' about my askin' for some pay for towin' in Cap. Briscoe's body, but I ain't so mean as some would try to make me out."

"All right," said Parton. "If you are willing to

leave it all to me, I think that we shall be able to arrange it so that we shall both be satisfied."

"I'm willin'," said Captain Sears, "and if you've re'ly got anythin' down there, I guess th' air's clear enough so 's't you can go down now an' look for it."

Then they went below.

The unbearable odor had to a very large extent departed from the hold when they entered it. There was in the bottom of the passageway between the piled mahogany about three feet of water, and they stepped into it cautiously. This was in part due to the natural seepage into a wooden ship, a large part of it was undoubtedly the water which had been released by the explosion from the Captain's great fresh-water tank, and some of it had come in through the broken deck during rains. Parton pushed his way through this, holding the lantern before him so as to light the way.

There were few evidences that the explosion had had any definite effect in this part of the ship. As the Captain had surmised, its effect had been mostly upward. The *Lydia* had been built with strong transverse bulkheads of sturdy oak, and Parton could see that that one which formed the after wall of the hold into which they had entered had been wrenched and strained, for thin glimpses of moonlight which poured through the jagged hole in the deck beyond gleamed faintly; but the forward bulkhead did not seem even to have been strained. Indeed, had it not been for the presence of the water underfoot, and that penetrating, dreadful odor, Parton might have imagined that he was again in the hold during that eventful voyage which had led to so many strange occurrences—occurrences of which

this midnight exploration was not the least unusual.

While Captain Sears went forward to see how badly things were damaged there, Parton turned into the narrow alley which offered access to the log wherein he had concealed his treasure. He made the count which located it more by feeling than by sight, and, when he had found it, flashed his lantern on it so that he might, by finding the impression of the key which he had hammered into it, be sure that he had made no mistake. He found this without difficulty, but he drew his breath in quickly when he saw that the earth which he remembered to have rubbed over the log's end was quite gone. It showed as clean of it as if it had been intentionally scoured. Instantly the thought came to him that this meant that the mate had been there, and, in working at the cavity, had rubbed it off. He could feel that his face had paled with this suggestion; but an instant later, when he thrust his finger in, he could feel the plug which the Captain had whittled for him tight in its place, and he was reassured. It was only after at least five minutes of work with the augur that he succeeded in dislodging this.

In the meantime Captain Sears was examining the hold forward and from time to time shouting comments on its condition back to Parton, who replied, although not always with great intelligence. It would be difficult to describe the emotions which thrilled through him as each one of the little wads of crumpled paper fell into his scooped palm at the hole's mouth. He smiled as in his mind he likened his feelings to those of a miser when he fingers his hoard over; but he knew that they were not really at all the same. He had won those gems by hard

work and desperate adventure in places where men need quick brains, strong wills and sturdy bodies in order to succeed; he had saved them from his grasping step-father by strategy which had well-nigh ended in his death; he was recovering them at a time when their recovery meant that happiness of home and love which all men crave. He almost laughed audibly as his fingers pressed the paper wads and felt the hard, irregularly shaped core in each of them. At last the cavity was empty, and he had his fortune in his pockets once again.

This accomplished, he shouted to Captain Sears.

"Find what ye wanted?" asked that seaman in a low, bass rumble from the darkness forward.

"Yes," said Parton.

"Well, let's git out o' this, then," said the Captain. "Th' air down here is staler than a last year's newspaper, and it smells a damn sight wuss!"

The two men met just beneath the open hatch. They were then standing in a deep three feet of water, which swung with the gentle motion of the ship as she felt the slow heaving of the long swell from the Atlantic. Just as he was about to put his foot upon the ladder to climb upward to the open air above, Captain Sears noticed something which the lantern light showed white, lying beneath the water close behind the ladder. He stooped over to look at it, and swung his lantern so that he could see. He gave another glance at the thing which had attracted his attention, and then he gasped and stepped back so that he collided sharply with Parton, who was behind him.

"What is it, Captain?" Parton asked.

He could see that Sears's face had paled, and his

agitation was further evidenced when he dropped his lantern, which fell into the water and went out.

"Down there!" said Sears, pointing. "I almost stepped on it!"

As he still pressed backwards, Parton made way for him, and himself advanced, holding his lantern close to the surface of the water and looking eagerly to see what it was which had so disturbed the Captain. But when he saw it, he, too, hesitated, horror struck. Shining in the flickering rays of the yellow light Parton saw a dead, distorted face gleam up at him. He stooped a little lower over it and recognized the mate. His early surmise had been quite correct in most things. The mate *had* returned, and, ignorant of the explosive, had thought the fire would give him time to find the diamonds. This explained the fact that the clamps were off the hatch. He had opened it to go below—doubtless with the assistance of others from the boat's crew, who, less nervy than himself, had then returned to wait for him in the boat in safety until he should return to them. There could never be any way of telling whether he had had any time to make much search before the end came. Perhaps he had fallen, dazed by the shock on the very instant when he had reached the hold, and been drowned in the water which poured down from the burst tank. Perhaps he had had time to make a fruitless search for the hidden stones and was just returning to the ladder when the concussion came which laid him unconscious at its foot, where the encroaching water ran in on him and smothered him as he lay senseless. At any rate he lay there, dead.

Parton, after the first shock of the horror of it had passed, was for making an effort to carry the body

to the deck above; but Sears assured him that it would be a crime against the law to move it before the coroner had viewed it. Besides, there were evidences that its disturbance would be attended by distressing consequences. It had lain there in the water, now, for many days.

As Parton climbed the ladder he was filled by conflicting and distressing emotions. He could scarcely feel sympathy for the man who lay there dead—but his had, surely, been a very dreadful death! Captain Sears, however, whose first horror had been so greatly in excess of Parton's, chuckled when he reached the open air, and said:

“I reckon '*twasn’t* rats we smelt, now, after all!”

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

FAIR WEATHER

They's stormy times at sea that's likely to bring death to luckless sailors; but they don't hurt 'em any worse than tropic ca'ms. What's re'lly comfortin' an pleasant is them days when there's jest enough a-doin' to make things hump a little an' keep th' crew jest busy so that they won't have time enough to loaf at meals nor sleep around the decks while they're on watch. Then, if they's weevils in th' biscuit they won't see 'em, an' swallerin' rapid, won't have time to taste 'em, an' turnin' in at night they'll be too hard to work at snorin' to give 'em any chance to talk about th' patent medicines that's advertised to cure insomnia.—*The Logbook of the Lyddy.*

Captain Burgee had refused to budge from the dock until Parton should appear again from the bowels of the ship, and, while Lyddy had hovered over him and, once or twice, had inquired anxiously if he did not think that he had best go home, she had really been quite as acutely anxious to await the young man's coming as he had been. Norah, half sorry that she had turned away from the investigating expedition, walked nervously up and down, more busily occupied than she could have wished in "bein' introduced around." She had not been classified as "Sociable" by the people of the Cape since her arrival. When the two strangers had returned with "Aunt Lyddy" and the Captain from New York, there had been a flutter of excitement among the natives as to just how much and what attention they should pay to them; but the newcomers had very soon found their own places in the small society of the neighborhood. Norah had returned all the calls

the good women of the Cape had made on her, and Parton had occasionally joined the men at their evening gatherings at the "store," where he had won their respect and good will by his ability to tell stories of adventurous South African life; but, still, on this occasion, which had strangely enough taken on somewhat of the formality of a social gathering, the folk seemed to be a little afraid of the tall and well-dressed Irish girl. There were those on the Cape who almost doubted her right to claim nationality in the Emerald Isle because she was so different from the Irish they had known; but she was fond of babies, and, even on Cape Cod, where new-born human beings are almost rare enough in these days to be classed as curiosities—counting out the Portuguese, who rank neither quite so low as animals nor quite so high as humans—this had been a highway to the female heart. So, when she strolled away from the Burgees, she had no lack of a certain shy society.

But as Captain Sears and then Parton appeared on the deck of the *Lydia*, through the forward hatch, and then crossed the plank to the dock, curiosity got the better even of Cape Cod reserve, and there was a movement toward them which would have been more general had it not been for the previous creaking of the dock at the time of the first rush. Captain Sears succeeded in securing for himself the undivided and breathless attention of the crowd for a minute by calling loudly—he had heard it done once at a public meeting:

"Is there a doctor present here to-night? If so, let him come for'ard."

One of the two practitioners of Provincetown hur-

ried through the crowd and asked what the matter was, and who was hurt.

"There ain't nobody hurt," said Slocum, "but we found a man in there."

"He's prob'ly nigh starved to death," said some sympathetic woman. "Must a-got into the hold by accident."

Captain Sears glanced at her with pity.

The doctor was all activity.

"Where is he," he asked eagerly. "Will you go back with me? Shan't we try to bring him up?"

Then it was that Sears realized that he had been somewhat precipitate in calling for a doctor so dramatically. He hesitated.

"Well," he said at length, "I dunno's you *could* do much good, after all, Doc. He's been dead, I reckon, nigh about two months."

Had the matter been less tragic there would have been a laugh then; but a great and overwhelming respect for death is ingrained in New England character, and most of the men emitted shocked streams of surprised tobacco juice, while nearly all the women exclaimed with sharp intakes of the breath.

Parton was very well satisfied to let Captain Sears take upon himself the telling of the grawsome tale and hurried to the Burgee group. Before he had crossed that shaky planking of the dock, Norah had her hands clasped upon his arm. The Captain gazed eagerly at his face, which seemed to bob uncertainly about in the flickering of the lantern light. Norah was a bit paler, even, than the moonlight warranted. It was Mrs. Burgee who spoke first, in an anxious whisper.

"Did ye git 'em?" she asked, huskily.

Parton nodded. He could see that neither she nor Norah had heard, or at least paid heed to what Captain Sears had been saying. All their eyes were for him; all their ears were for what he might say to them. When they reached the Captain, the old man smiled eagerly; but was evidently not enlightened by what he saw in Parton's face. He leaned forward with almost tremulous eagerness.

"He got 'em!" Lyddy said, almost in a whisper.

The Captain's lips opened tremulously. They closed again. Finally they formed the words:

"Well, by John Quincy Adams! Shake!"

Parton reached over and took the old man's almost helpless paw in his with a hearty clasp. It was Lyddy who kissed him first, and there were tears in her eyes, for while they had been waiting on the dock there for Parton's reappearance, unpleasant thoughts had come into her mind. She had begun to realize that, while the event which she had prayed might come to pass had been accomplished, and the diamonds had been found again, yet it was not probable that their finding would much change what was to her the most important detail of the situation. She had said nothing about this either to the Captain or to Norah during Parton's absence; but she had thought of it and had tried to steel her nerves to meet the coming shock of the announcement that now that they were prosperous again they would soon be going from the Cape.

Captain Sears was telling of their awful find there in the hold with so much gusto that her sharp ears caught a word or two of it.

"What's that he's a-talkin' about findin' in th' hold?" she asked.

Parton told.

"Well, by John!" said the Captain. "They is some rats, it appears, that don't leave a sinkin' ship!"

"Obed!" said his wife, reprovingly. But she added: "Mebbe he's better off!"

And the Captain said:

"Th' world is, anyhow."

A moment later he said to Parton, ignoring the women's frightened glances at the *Lydia's* gloomy hulk:

"They ain't nothin' we can do. Let's go home."

The first part of the journey to the house on the other side of the big dune was made almost in silence. The Captain sat muffled up in his big arm-chair in the wagon, while Norah, Mrs. Burgee and Parton trudged alongside of it.

At about the time when they had covered half of their homeward journey, the Captain broke the silence.

"Well, it's a fine night!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Norah, "it is a fine night!"

"Just chill enough to make it tangey, and—and nice," said Mrs. Burgee.

"Yes," said Parton, "just about enough."

And there was no more talk until they had reached the house and entered its cheery living room. There the Captain was placed again in his wheeled chair, and Lyddy carefully unwrapped him.

"I feel jest like a pack o' chewin' tobacco," he said, as she took the manifold garments off. "They's enough layers on me—all I lack is jest one casin' of tin foil."

They gathered around the dining table.

"It's some like I was to sea ag'in," said the Cap-

tain, as he glanced at the clock. "I ain't be'n up so late as this since I stood watch there on th' *Lyddy*."

Parton, one after the other, unfolded the wads of crumpled newspaper and revealed the stones that they had held. After they had been placed upon the tablecloth, Mrs. Burgee looked at them with curiosity. Norah had a small diamond of rather good shape and cunning setting in a ring. It was the first that the New England woman had ever seen "for certain," and she leaned across the table without words, took this from her and compared it with the awkwardly shaped and dull looking stones which Parton set such store by. An uncut diamond is not impressive in appearance. She could scarcely believe that Parton's dull looking pebbles were at all the same as this, or that they were worth as much as he believed, although he had placed a very modest valuation on them as a matter of fact.

But there were other things in her thought which took her mind away from them almost entirely, although she kept repeating to herself a remark which she had made shortly after they sat down at the table.

"There wa'n't never so much money in so small space before on Cape Cod since the wind and the sea built it of the shiftin' sand."

For some time the four sat and regarded the diamonds with faces in which almost every pleasant expression had its fleeting place. Once or twice Lyddy had to wink rapidly in order to prevent her eyes from betraying the fact that there was an undertone of thinking in her mind which was not agreeable; but she did it bravely and successfully, and never for a moment allowed the others to see a hint in her expression which might have detracted from

the pleasant emotions of the moment. The Captain was obviously happy, although he was as obviously sleepy.

She noticed that his eyelids drooped, and presently rose and said that he must go to bed.

"Ain't you a-comin' too, Lyddy?" he asked.

"I'll be 'long by an' by, Obed," she said. "I got to kind of look 'round a little bit 'fore I go to bed. We ain't never had no sech value in th' house before, ye know, pa!"

The old man was worn out with the night's events. His weariness was not oppressive, for all the things which had led up to it had been such very pleasant things; but it was very real. He was joyous over Parton's fortune. He did not look into the future as his wife did, and see the gloom of loneliness ahead. The thought that now that the young folk had their fortune they would no longer care to live the humdrum life of the house there on the Cape did not oppress him as it did her. Norah kissed him before Lyddy wheeled him away toward bed, and Parton shook hands with him with a heartiness that did his heart good, and he was very happy.

"Ef you women folks don't look out," he said, "I'll git into th' habit of bein' kissed, an' my system will begin to crave for it like a drunkard's does for liquor. Best be careful! Suppose I should turn up some day with th' kiss jim jams! Then how you would feel for havin' encouraged me in gittin' to be a drunkard!"

Sleep was as far from the eyes of Parton and Norah as it was from Mrs. Burgee's. After the old man had been made comfortable, she took a few turns in the open air, making a great pretense of

examining the shutters on the outside, to see that they were safe, and finally came in and joined the young people.

She cleared her throat and so plainly showed that she was nervous and excited that they looked at her in surprise. It was evident, when she spoke, that she had braced herself, physically and mentally, to meet a shock. It was after one, and the loud ticking of the clock—clocks always seem to tick louder late at night than they do at any other time—was almost startlingly audible in the hush which involuntarily fell upon the other two before she spoke.

"Well," she said, "well, I s'pose you young ones will be ready to start, now, 'most any time!"

The strain under which the words were spoken gave her voice a note which sounded like asperity. It surprised them, and they looked at her amazed.

"For where?" asked Norah.

"Why——," Parton began, and did not finish.

"Now you're rich," said Mrs. Burgee, looking persistently and unwinkingly at the kerosene lamp, "I don't s'pose you'll want to stay here on th' Cape. Obed and me couldn't make it pleasant for no rich folks!"

Norah's quicker and more sympathetic nature had an inkling of the trouble that was on the old woman's mind before Parton's slower, male perception had even guessed at it.

She rose and put her hand on Mrs. Burgee's shoulder. But Mrs. Burgee did not look at her. She did not dare to. She was afraid that if she did she would break down and she did not want that. There are women of New England whose hearts are as soft as any, whose femininity is as complete as

womankind can know; but who fight tears as desperately as might the most unwilling man.

"Sure, are you going to turn us out just because we have had good fortune?" Norah asked with something between a twinkle and a tear in her Irish eyes.

"No," said Mrs. Burgee, still staring at the lamp. "No—I'd know's we'd turn ye out, exactly; but you won't find anythin' here on th' Cape to interest ye—not now that you're so prosp'rrous."

"I didn't think," said Norah, still with that glint that was between a twinkle and a tear sparkling in her eyes, "that you were so anxious to get rid of us."

"You'll be wantin' to go away," said Mrs. Burgee, paying no attention to the implied accusation. "You'll be a-wantin' to go away now that you've got your money!"

Parton by this time saw what the trouble was, and started to make a protest. If he had not been stopped, he would have told Mrs. Burgee that she had been wholly wrong in guessing at their plans. He was really shocked when Norah interrupted him by placing her hand upon his arm, and said to Mrs. Burgee, solemnly:

"Yes. We shall be wanting to go away before long, now. We had thought of going somewhere where the winter will be warmer."

"I thought you'd be considerin' somethin' o' that sort," said the old woman, swallowing hard. Her eyes dropped from their steady gazing at the lamp, and her fingers worked nervously at a tight fold they had made in her checked apron.

Norah looked at her and smiled. Parton was amazed. His wife actually seemed to be enjoying

the distress of the old woman. He could not understand it. It was not at all like Norah! He even spoke her name in a reproachful tone of protest; but it made no difference to her. He could not imagine what had come over her. He had learned to know her as the most considerate of women—but this was plainly cruel. He was about to make a more emphatic protest, when again she stopped him with a gesture, and continued:

"Yes," she said. "We *have* been thinking about going! We thought perhaps you might be willing to let us stay a week longer; but then we thought that we would go away."

"I'll be glad to have ye stay th' week out," said Mrs. Burgee slowly. Her voice was dry and low with pain.

"Sure, then, if it won't bother you," said Norah, "we will do that. And then, I think that we had better get away to find some milder climate."

"It prob'ly *would* be pleasanter," said Mrs. Burgee, humbly.

"Yes," said Norah, calmly, "we thought it would be. It seemed to us, also, that it might be better for the Captain."

"He's awful glad to have you stay here," said Mrs. Burgee, brightening up. "I hope you ain't a-goin' away because ye think ye bother him—or me! Ye don't—a mite. Ye don't bother us at all. We've—been real glad to have ye with us!"

"Oh!" said Norah. "You don't understand at all. I meant that the warm climate might be better for the Captain."

"Why," said Mrs. Burgee, stammering, "why, ye don't cal'late on takin' Obed along with ye, do ye?"

In her pain it occurred to her that perhaps it had been planned that not only should she lose her young folk; but that the Captain was to be kidnapped and she left alone there on the cheerless Cape. She clasped her hands nervously. It was with a resignation that should have been charged to her credit on the recording angel's books that she admitted, an instant later, while her mind was filled with self-accusation because of what she felt had been her selfishness:

"That's real good of ye to think of him. I guess it would do him a sight of good. He re'lly needs it." She paused. Then she added:

"An' I could get along here right comf'table. It'll —it'll be a real rest to me not to have him to think about!"

And, in saying this, Lydia Burgee knew that she was lying; but her lie was one of those that are forgiven even as the words are spoken.

Then came Norah's little climax.

"Why," said she, "sure, aren't you going too? We—we couldn't get along without you. Faith! Aunt Lyddy, we'd be lost if you should say you wouldn't go along!"

Mrs. Burgee literally stiffened in her chair. The pleasant shock affected her, not as it would have affected a young person, or, for the matter of that, not as it would have affected an old one born and bred elsewhere than on Cape Cod, stern land of self-denial. She did not at all know what to do or say. She had been bracing herself for the pain of hearing that her young folk were to go out of her life and leave it empty and forlorn. Had this come she would have met it, so far as outward demonstrations

went, with the stoicism of an Apache at the stake. She would not have winced while folk looked on! But this! It was as if expected flames had turned to cooling streams of pleasant perfume. She did not change her position very much; but she looked at them with wide-opened eyes, and, after perhaps ten seconds, spoke.

"Don't—don't—don't try to fool me," she said, slowly. Her eyes shifted from one face to the other. Her lips twitched nervously, and, when she stopped speaking, her tongue made little running trips along them. Parton had caught the spirit of the situation by this time, and his heart pumped full of gratitude and sentiment for the old woman who sat there, rigid and intent. He saw the charm, the pathos of the moment. He had not, up to that time, realized how completely he had been taken into the hearts of the old couple, and he had come very far from realizing how completely they had been taken into his. It was a "psychic moment" for all three. Norah broke the spell by going to the older woman and holding out her arms. A moment later, when "Aunt Lyddy" had emerged from this embrace, tearful, but very happy, Parton kissed her, somewhat awkwardly. She hugged him violently and kissed him many times.

Then she arose and looked at them, half-laughing and half-crying.

"I guess I'm an old fool," she said, "but I'm an awful happy fool!"

A few moments later she arose and went in and woke the Captain. He had been very tired when he had gone to bed, and for a few moments after she had roused him he had no real conception of what

the cause for the disturbance was. He figured for a time that the *Lydia* was making dirty weather of it and that they wanted him on deck. He grumbled. He John Quincy Adamsed things in general. Finally he roused enough to hear her story and sense what it meant. Then he was happy, too. He called loudly to the young folk and they went in and sat with Mrs. Burgee on the side of his bed for a few moments. They made a quiet but a very joyous quartette.

It was after they had bidden him a final good-night and had left his room that Mrs. Burgee took her sun-bonnet from the peg and said slowly, with a queer light in her delighted eyes:

"I got somethin' to attend to. Don't you wait for me. Bimeby I'll be back."

"Can't I do it for you, or can't it wait till morning?" Parton asked.

"No," she said. "It ain't nothin' that *any* one can do for me an'—it *can't* wait!"

Then she resolutely opened the door, crossed the porch, walked down the gravel path between the box plants, and started, in the moonlight, along the sandy road towards Provincetown.

Norah and Parton, much surprised, went out upon the porch and watched her. As she passed over the dune from which she always waved good-by to the Captain when he was sitting on the porch and she was going to the village, they expected her to turn and make the sign; but she did not. After half an hour they decided to follow slowly in her wake, planning to meet her as she came back. Neither could bear the thought of going to bed until the dear old lady was quite comfortable and safe in *hers*.

Parton put the diamonds in his pockets and turned down the lights. Together they went out upon the porch and shut the door. Then they, too, walked down the road and climbed the dune.

From the top of it they could see almost into Provincetown, and, in the brilliant moonlight, any figure coming along the lighter colored reach would have stood out darkly. But there was no figure walking on the road. White and clear it stretched toward the village, bordered for the most part by sparsely grassed sand; and even shining white and free where it cut through the little forest of scrub pines which had been, in times gone by, covered and uncovered by the drifting sand.

Not seeing her, they strolled slowly on, busy with their thoughts and whispered talk, until they were in the very midst of the melancholy grove. The night was very beautiful. Their footsteps were deadened by the softly clinging sand. They even ceased their whispering and were quite content with the silent beauty of the night and each other's presence.

It was when they were just about to emerge from the small forest that Norah put her hand on Parton's arm with a warning touch and, in a soft whisper, bade him stop and listen. There came from the pines a murmur that was not that of the wind among their deadened branches. He followed his young wife's pointing finger with his eyes' and saw the murmur's source. There, in the little hollow where she had prayed, he saw Lydia. She was utterly unconscious of their presence, and her face was uplifted toward the moon as she knelt upon the sand. The soft light falling on it made it almost beautiful, they thought, as they stood silently and gazed.

At first her hands were dropped inertly at her sides. She seemed to be in a deep reverie—there with her upturned eyes gazing at the glowing moon—but presently they could see her lips move. She looked weird and exalted in the moonlight. She slowly straightened up until, from her knees upward, she was quite upright. Then she reached her arms out mutely toward the sky. Her lips moved again. This time Aunt Lyddy's words were borne softly on the night wind toward the Partons, and they heard her say:

“Oh, God! I’m much obliged!”

THE CHAPTER AFTER THE LAST

The endin' of a v'yage seems like somethin' final till we have to git ready for th' next one. What a ship's for is to sail.—*The Logbook of the Lydia.*

It may be interesting to those who have been good enough to read what has gone before to hear a hint of what came after. Norah asked for and received from the Captain, as her souvenir of the wreck, the logbook of the *Lydia*. She found it full of entries especially interesting to her because of their references to small events closely connected with her husband's extraordinary voyage; but, besides these entries, she found many more or less original reflections made by the Captain at odd moments, most of them rough in grammar and with mis-spelled words sticking painfully among them here and there—like sore thumbs, he said—but not less indicative, because of this, of the Captain's quaint philosophy and kindly mind. After she had become the owner of this little volume and I had decided that I would tell the story in a book, she gave me permission to use a few of the many entries as chapter headings to begin the various divisions of the narrative, and I have done so. Having secured this privilege, I went further, and asked her if she would not let me make a little volume of such extracts. To this she has consented, and so, before long, I shall offer “The Logbook of the *Lyddy*,” in which will be preserved such comments as the old

man made from time to time upon human life in general and many other things.

Examination of the *Lydia*'s hulk by experts developed that the Captain's judgment had been right about the effects of the explosion. She was much less damaged than at first she had appeared to be. The concussion had spent most of its force in the centre of the ship, and its impulse had been upward. The *Lydia*'s bottom planking had not been so much as started. It was when the examination of her condition had been completed and this cheerful announcement had been made that a plan was born in Norah's mind which, afterwards, bore much pleasurable fruit.

"We are rich now, aren't we, Henry?" she asked one day while she and her husband were walking toward the house after an inspection of the ship.

"Yes, dear," said Parton. "Rich enough to let us do nearly what we please for the balance of our days and still have something over for the Captain and for Lyddy."

"I am glad you spoke of that," she said. "I had thought of it; but I am glad you spoke of it."

A moment later she questioned him again.

"Could the *Lydia* be rebuilt so that she would be sea-worthy?" was her query.

"She might be. Her upperworks are gone, but her hull is quite as stanch as ever. Why?" asked Parton.

"I have a plan," she said. "The old ship is the dearest thing in all the world to our old friends, except, perhaps, ourselves. We owe them much."

"We do, indeed!" said Parton, heartily.

"Then, if we are rich enough, why not pay a part of our debt by having her repaired?"

"Norah," said Parton, as he pressed her arm with satisfaction, "you are wonderful. We will do it."

And they did.

The refitting changed the *Lydia* into something between merchantman and yacht. Her first voyage was notable, principally because of the nature of her passenger list. The voyagers were selected by the two women, and the choice was made because of real and carefully investigated worth—and need of long vacations. Her cruise, with the Captain in command, partially disabled but still proudly capable of standing watch in daylight, will long live in the memory of all those who were on board of her; and the night—the crucial, almost tragic night—when the Captain in an emergency forgot infirmity and saved her and her passengers, has become history.

And, notwithstanding the many references to this episode made in the public press at the time, I have decided to, some time, make an account of it and other episodes of that unique voyage, and put it between pasteboard covers. And there may be those who have been good enough to go with me thus far in the tale of folks and vessel who will also follow the rejuvenated ship's adventures, and sail with us again. And if so, I shall be glad, for of all things, I love best good company at sea.

